DETROIT
METRO TIMES
VOL. 46 | ISSUE 17 | JUNE 10-23 2026

THE BEAT GOES ON

THE PERSEVERANCE OF DETROIT'S DEADBEAT BEAT

By Jeff Milo

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JUNE

NO COVER EVENTS

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sunday karaoke WITH MATT THE MILLIONAIRE	01 CLOSED	02 **tuesday karaoke** WITH MATT THE MILLIONAIRE	03 **WEDNESDAY LOUNGE JAM** W/ KESHTKAR & CO.	04 FIRST THURSDAYS **JUMBOTRON**	05 **NOBODY'S BUSINESS** THE HI-VIEWS DJ TOP KAT	06 **THE GLAMOUR MACHINE** STORMFELDT DJ SOVAIN SYLVAIN
07	08 CLOSED	09	10	11	12 **COCKTAIL SHAKE** DJ JAM JAM	13 **HEARTBREAK BEATS** DJS ZUMBY & JOSH
14	15 CLOSED	16	17	18 **POP CULTURE TRIVIA NIGHT** WITH SCOTT ZUMBERG	19 **MEGA WEEDGE** DJ ZAK FRIELING	20 **LANTERNFLY** VIOLET DAYBED DJ SANFORD
21	22 CLOSED	23	24	25 SKA NIGHT DETROIT RIDDIM CREW HARMOLODICS	26 **CINECYDE** THE ZOTZ SPIELTIER	27 **WINDS OF NEPTUNE** THE WITCHES DJ DANTON
28	29 CLOSED	30	01	02	03 **HAVEN'T YOU HEARD?** WITH DJS ZAK & DINA	04 CLOSED

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NEXT MONTH

FRI JUIY 3
HAVEN'T YOU HEARD?
W/ DJS DINA & ZAK

FRI JULY 10
MATTHEW SMITH
W/ JOHN KRAUTNER
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SAT JULY 11
THE HENTCHMEN
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EDITORIAL

Editor in Chief - Lee DeVito

Investigative Reporter - Steve Neavling

ADVERTISING

Advertising Executive - Jessica Smith

CREATIVE SERVICES

Creative Director - Haimanti Germain

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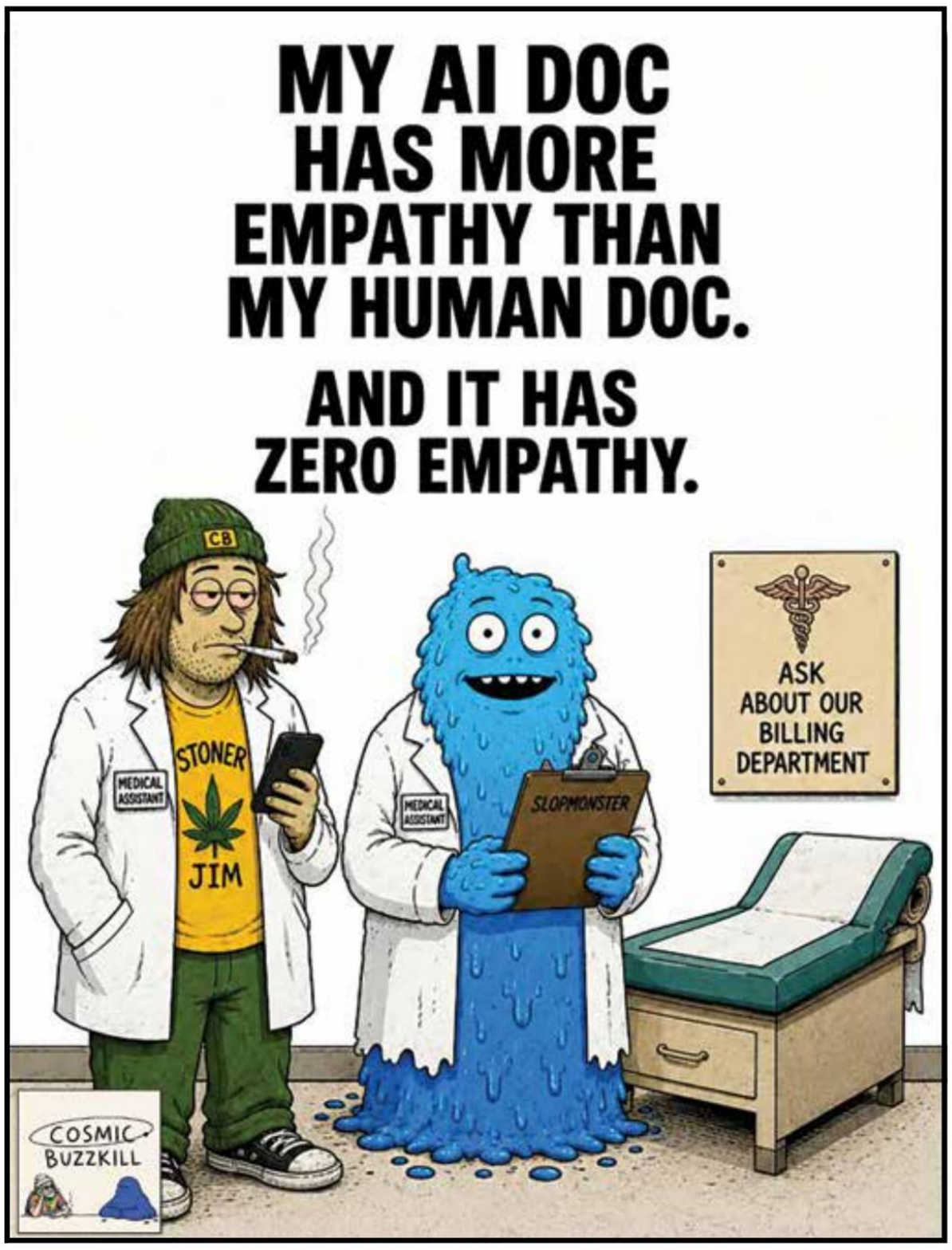
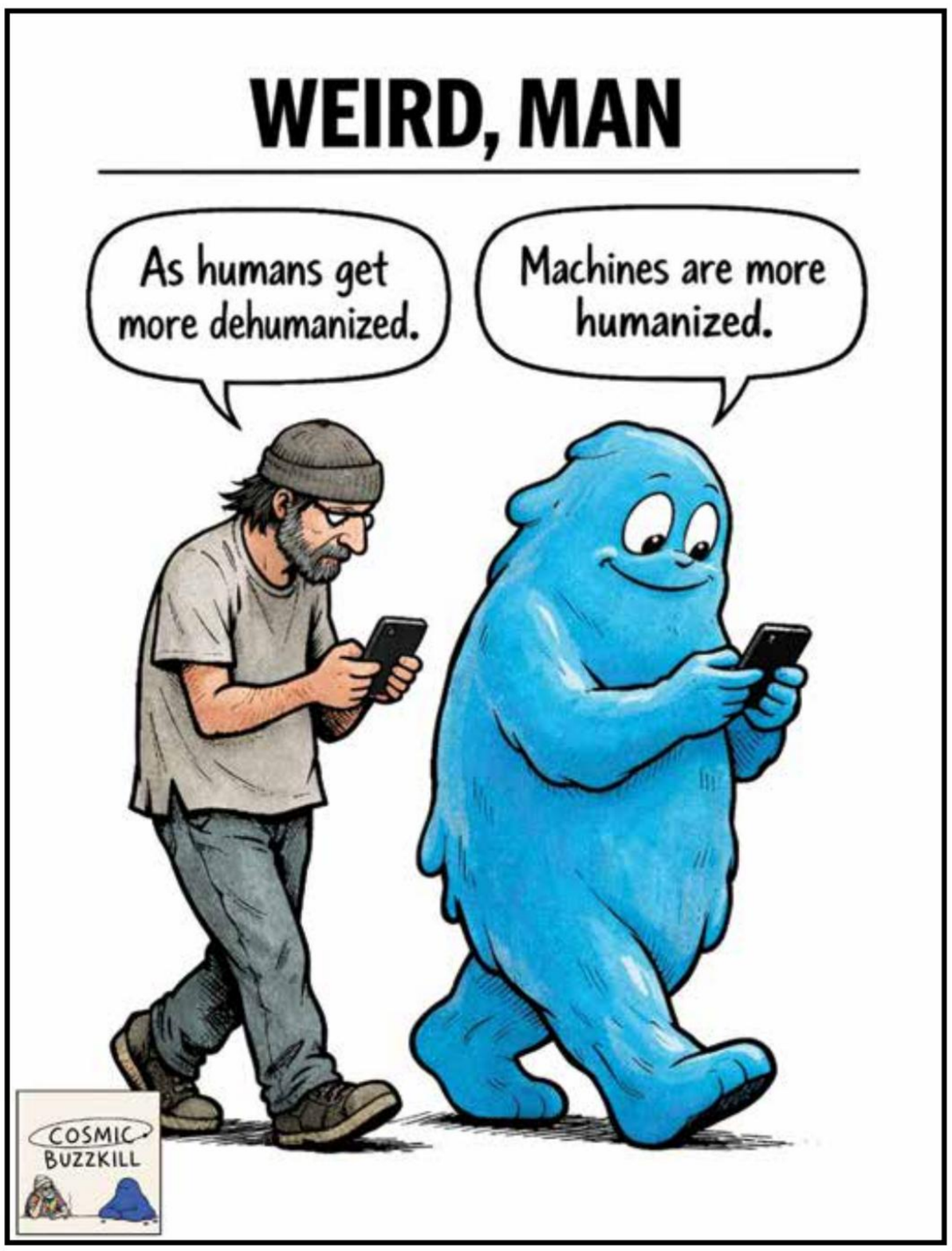




NEWS & VIEWS

Feedback

Readers respond to contributor Eddie B. Allen's article about ongoing struggles at WSU decades after a historic 1989 student-led "study-in" protest movement, "How Wayne State's battle for African American Studies came full-circle."

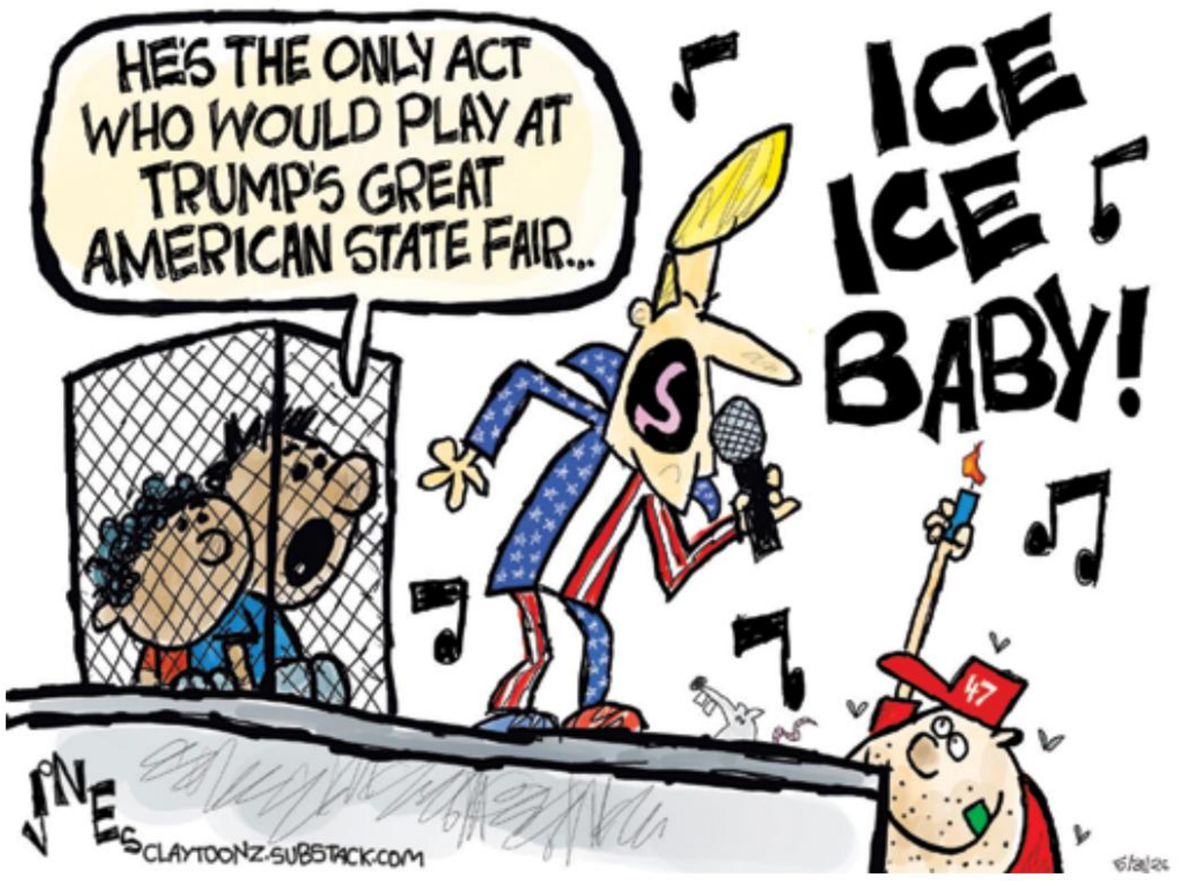
I am honored to graduate from the Department of Africana Studies, and the tremendous global experience from awesome faculty who enhanced my worldview. The department has deserved much more.
—@yosefu.akinade, Instagram

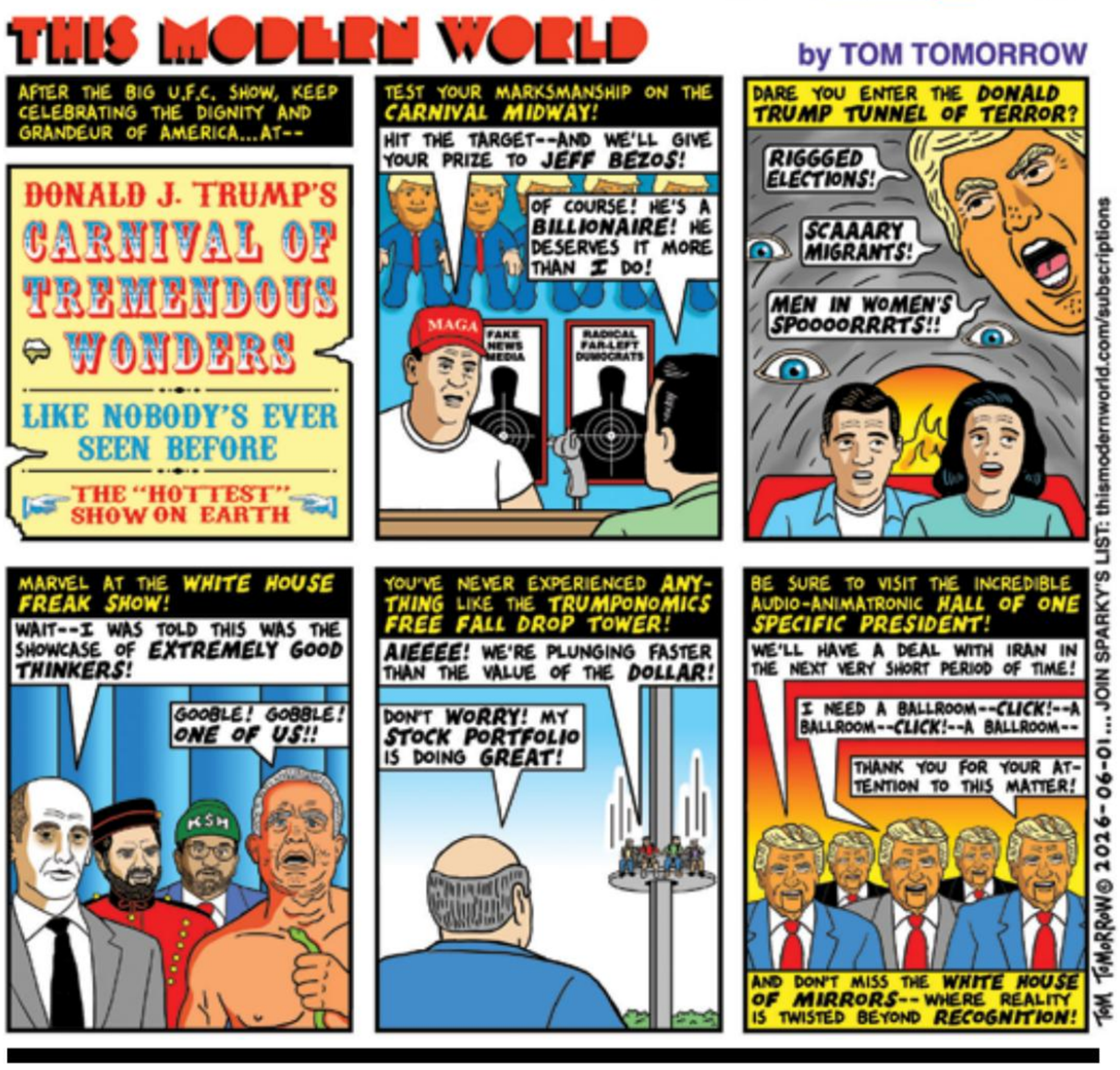
As a graduate from this department who learned from some amazing professors and department leaders, I hope WSU takes all next steps under community advisement. Detroit is a Black city and it deserves nothing less than a robust African American Studies Department at Wayne with Black leadership.
—@samalamascandalous, Instagram

Graduated this may from WSU with a minor in African American Studies honored to to be apart of greatness and continuing black excellence
@cynaealicia_, Instagram

Errata: The article incorrectly stated that Dr. Ollie Johnson resigned as chair. Johnson served multiple terms in the role; his contract expired in 2025 and was not renewed.

Have an opinion? Sound off: tips@detroitmetrotimes.com MT

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by TOM TOMORROW
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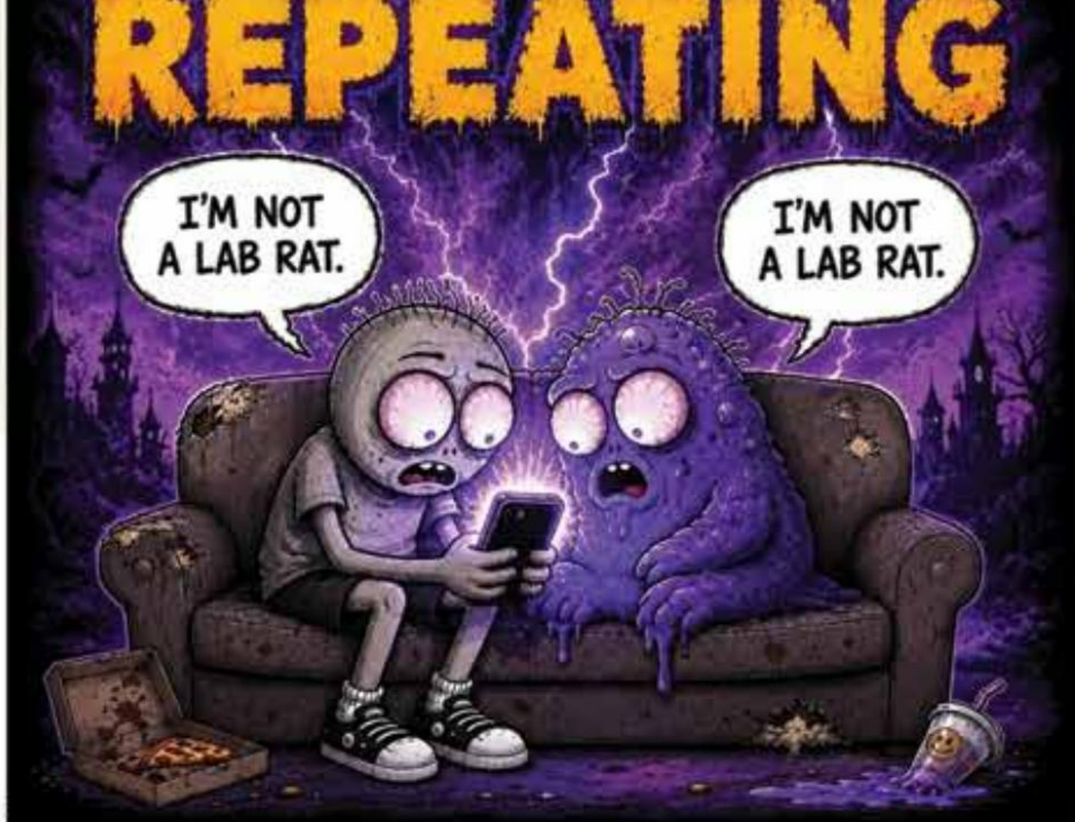

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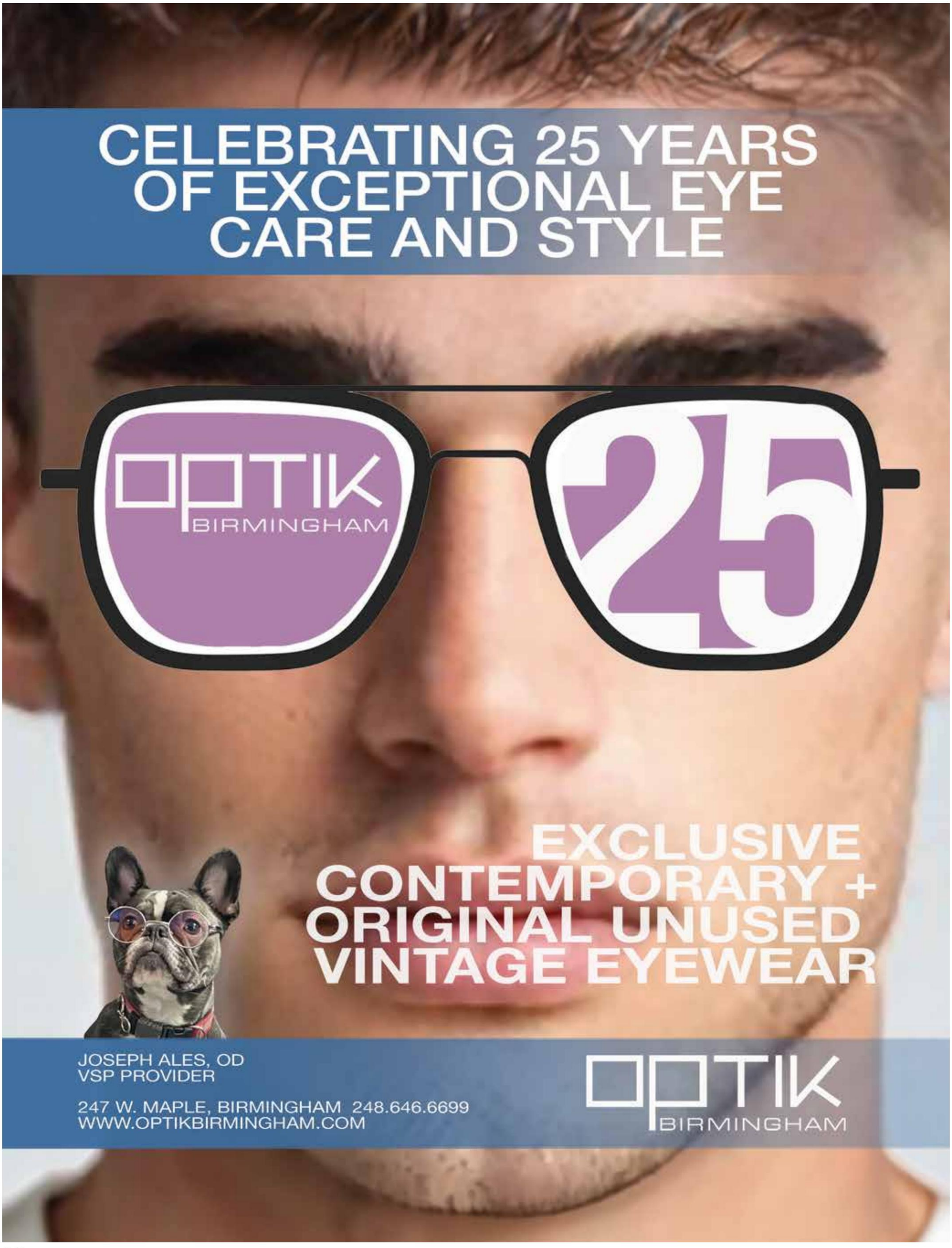
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PRESENTS

Abdul El-Sayed. COURTESY PHOTO

UAW endorses Abdul El-Sayed in major boost for Michigan Senate bid

The United Auto Workers endorsed Abdul El-Sayed in Michigan's closely watched U.S. Senate race Friday, giving the progressive former Wayne County health director one of the most coveted labor endorsements in the state less than two months before the Democratic primary.

The endorsement is a major boost for El-Sayed, who is trying to consolidate progressive and working-class voters in a competitive race against U.S. Rep. Haley Stevens and state Sen. Mallory McMorrow. The UAW is the largest labor union in Michigan and says it represents about 300,000 active and retired members in the state.

Nationally, the union remains one of the most politically influential labor organizations in the country, with federal filings showing more than 392,000 active members in 2025. Its retired members also remain deeply involved in the union's political organizing.

"UAW members in Michigan want a fighter in Washington, D.C. who isn't afraid to push forward a strong working-class agenda with moral clarity," the union said in its endorsement. "Having never taken a dime from corporate PACs, Dr. Abdul El-Sayed is someone we can trust to have our backs, including when we need it most — like come May Day 2028. From Medicare for All to banning stock buybacks, Dr. Abdul El-Sayed is ready, eager, and well-equipped to move our core issues in the U.S. Senate."

The endorsement strengthens El-Sayed's claim that he is the candidate most closely aligned with organized labor, economic populism, and the progressive wing of the Democratic Party. His campaign has emphasized his support for Medicare for All, banning stock buybacks, passing the PRO Act, and rejecting corporate PAC money.

"I am deeply honored and proud to have earned the support of the UAW," El-Sayed said in a statement. "Michigan union autoworkers built the American middle class and proved that when people stand together, there's nothing we can't accomplish."

El-Sayed added, "Unlike campaigns powered by corporate PAC money, AIPAC, and Washington insiders, our campaign is built alongside workers and union members. Together, we're going to take on corporate greed, rebuild an economy that works for working people, strengthen collective bargaining, and ensure that the future of Michigan manufacturing is built right here by union workers. Solidarity forever."

The endorsement comes as the Democratic primary remains fluid. Recent polling has shown El-Sayed, Stevens, and McMorrow trading positions in what has become one of the most closely watched Senate primaries in the country.

A RealClearPolling average of public surveys from April and May showed El-Sayed narrowly ahead, with 26.5% support, followed by Stevens at 22.8% and McMorrow at 17.5%. But individual polls have varied. A TIPP poll conducted May 20-23 found Stevens leading with 35%, followed by El-Sayed at 31% and McMorrow at 13%. A Mitchell Research poll conducted May 1-7 showed El-Sayed leading with 28%, Stevens at 18%, and McMorrow at 17%.

El-Sayed's campaign also released an internal Lake Research Partners poll showing him leading the field with 34%, followed by Stevens at 31% and McMorrow at 19%, with 15% undecided.

Earlier this spring, a Data for Progress poll showed the race essentially tied, with Stevens at 23%, El-Sayed at 22%, and McMorrow at 22%, while 33% of likely Democratic primary voters remained undecided.

The UAW endorsement could help El-Sayed sharpen his contrast with Stevens, who has drawn support from more centrist and pro-Israel Democratic groups, and McMorrow, who has tried to position herself between the party's progressive and establishment wings.

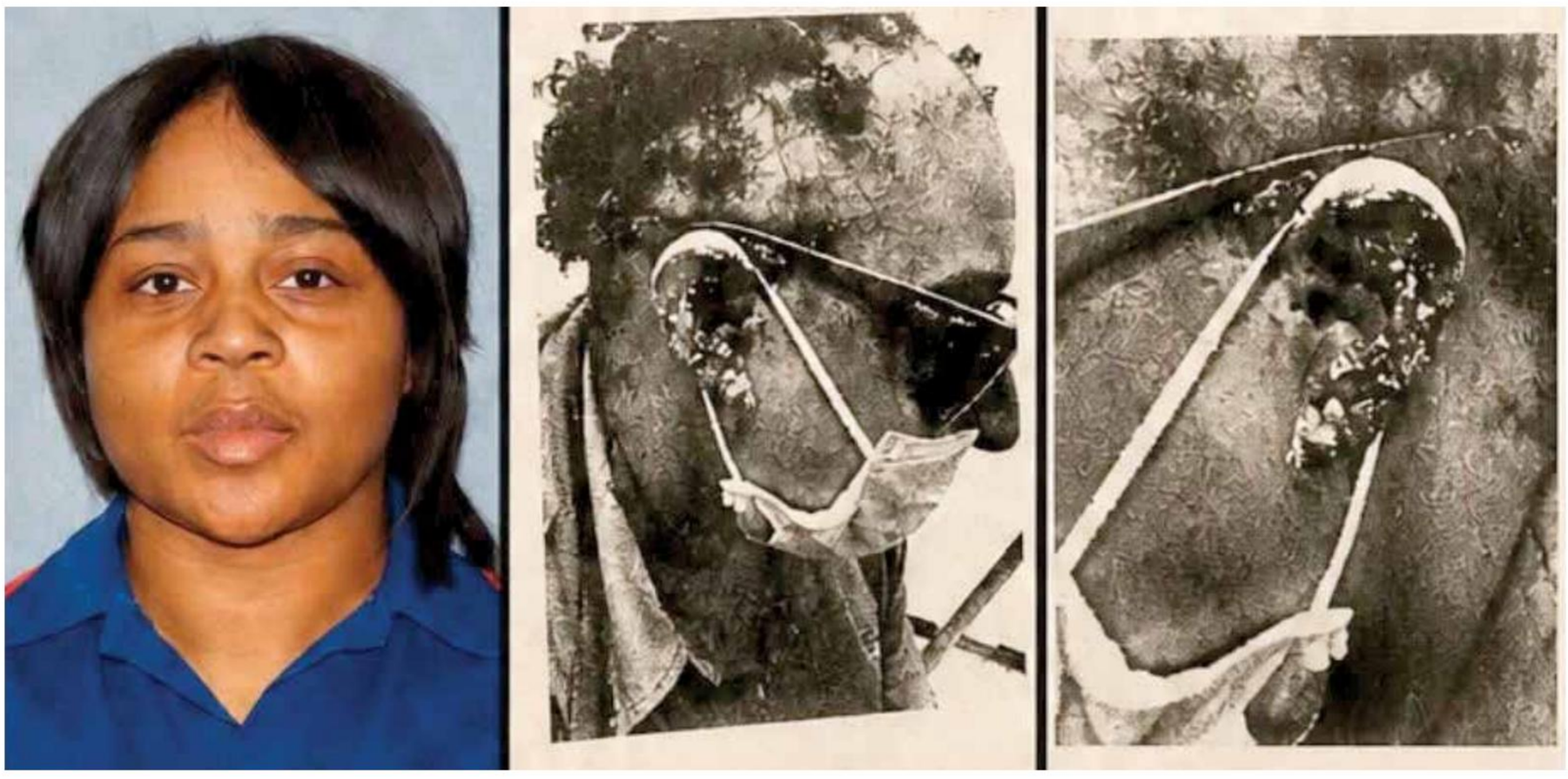
El-Sayed's campaign said he has rallied with laid-off UAW workers at Cleveland-Cliffs, marched with UAW Local 600 members, met with workers in communities hurt by outsourcing, and traveled the state listening to union members. On Friday, he was expected to join UAW Local 2093 American Axle workers on the picket line in Three Rivers as they fight for higher wages.

The UAW also endorsed Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson for governor Friday, a less surprising move for the leading Democrat in that race. The union said Michigan's 2026 gubernatorial election is critical to its long-term political plans and praised Benson as someone willing to stand up to corporate interests.

The endorsement gives El-Sayed a powerful labor ally in a race that remains unusually competitive less than two months before the primary. El-Sayed has already been endorsed by Sen. Bernie Sanders, National Nurses United, the Working Families Party, MoveOn, Common Defense, Our Revolution, and more than 150 local elected officials and organizations.

The Democratic primary is Aug. 4. The winner is expected to face Republican former U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers in the race to replace retiring U.S. Sen. Gary Peters.

—Steve Neavling



Krystal Clark, an inmate at Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility, says mold is ravaging her ears. MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Women are suffering and dying at Michigan's only women's prison, activists call for action

Two recent deaths at Michigan's only women's prison and the worsening health of a woman who says mold exposure is destroying her body are renewing calls for sweeping reforms at the troubled facility.

But while state lawmakers have introduced bills to expand the power of Michigan's Legislative Corrections Ombudsman, activists say the measures fall far short of what is needed. They are calling on lawmakers to instead introduce a more stringent proposal, the Krystal Clark Michigan Prison Accountability, Oversight, and Human Rights Act, which would close Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility within 12 months, create an independent oversight commission, require emergency medical intervention for women exposed to environmental hazards, and impose consequences on officials who conceal dangerous conditions.

The proposal, drafted last year by Survivors Speak Executive Director Trische Duckworth and longtime advocate Jay Love, was sent to lawmakers about 10 months ago. Advocates say there has been no meaningful legislative engagement, even as women at the prison continue to report mold exposure, medical neglect, retaliation, and unsafe conditions.

State Reps. Jennifer Wortz, R-Quincy, and Karl Bohnak, R-Deerton, introduced House Bills 5920 and 5921, which would expand the authority of the Legislative Corrections Ombudsman to investigate complaints involving the Michigan Department of Corrections.

The legislation comes after Rebecca Fackler, 57, died at Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility on May 17, four days after Khaira Howard, 28, died at the same prison. The deaths have intensified scrutiny of the Ypsilanti-area facility, which has faced years of allegations involving mold, unsafe conditions, inadequate medical care, retaliation, understaffing, and employee misconduct.

On May 21, 30 state lawmakers from both parties called for the resignation of Michigan Department of Corrections Director Heidi Washington, saying her leadership has been marked by "a pattern of denial, dishonesty, obfuscation, and obstruction."

But activists say more is needed to protect the 1,800 women at the prison and hundreds of MDOC employees.

Under current law, only prisoners or legislators may file complaints with the ombudsman. The new bills would allow corrections employees, family members of prisoners or corrections officers, and prisoner advocates to file complaints. The measures also would require MDOC to provide the ombudsman with access to medical, mental health, mortality, and morbidity records without requiring special release forms.

"It has been tragically apparent that more accountability is needed," Wortz said in a statement. "Officials are now investigating the death of Rebecca Fackler at the Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility, just days after the death of Khaira Howard. This is unacceptable. We need to guarantee that our correctional facilities are being operated with safety and transparency."

The bills also would require the ombudsman to publish monthly and annual public reports detailing the number of complaints received and how they were resolved. The legislation was referred to the House Committee on Judiciary.

"Our corrections officers have some of the toughest jobs in our criminal justice system," Bohnak said. "With extensive, documented failures within the state corrections department, our COs have been left without true leadership, often working long hours in often miserable conditions. By allowing corrections officers and their families to submit complaints to the ombudsman, we're creating a process for officers working in these unacceptable conditions to speak out."

But advocates who have spent years raising alarms about Women's Huron Valley say the bills do not go far enough.

Trische Duckworth, executive director of Survivors Speak, says the proposed expansion of the ombudsman's office ignores years of inaction by the same office.

"For us, we have witnessed the ombudsman taking part in the coverup," Duckworth tells *Metro Times*. "He's known about reports about the conditions for years and has done nothing. While we believe his office could use more power, separate of MDOC, he didn't effectively use the power he had. And a portion of legislation we are proposing would release the current Ombudsman from his duties, as well as anyone else who knew of these atrocities and did nothing."

Survivors Speak is instead renewing calls for lawmakers to introduce the Krystal Clark Michigan Prison Accountability, Oversight, and Human Rights Act, a broader proposal drafted last year by Duckworth and Love.

The proposal calls for closing Women's Huron Valley within 12 months, creating an independent MDOC oversight commission, requiring immediate medical examinations and treatment for women exposed to environmental hazards, releasing Clark and any woman with life-threatening symptoms connected to unsafe environmental conditions, and establishing independent inspections and public reporting requirements.

It also calls for accountability measures for officials who knowingly conceal dangerous conditions.

Love said lawmakers have shown little interest so far in advancing the legislation.

"We sent it and nobody has expressed anything," Love says. "We're still begging folks."

Love says she appreciates that Wortz and Bohnak are acknowledging serious problems inside Michigan prisons, especially at Women's Huron Valley, but says expanding the ombudsman's office is not enough.

"While we do appreciate these two state reps acknowledging that there is a serious problem inside Michigan prisons, especially at Women's Huron Valley, this legislation still falls short of what true accountability requires," Love says. "Expanding the power of the Legislative Corrections Ombudsman is a step... but let's be honest: oversight without enforcement can easily become another layer of bureaucracy while women and men continue to suffer behind those walls."

Love says advocates, families, incarcerated women, former employees, and whistleblowers have raised concerns for years, only to see the problems continue.

"If the state truly wants transparency and accountability, then more is needed," Love says.

She has called for independent environmental testing not controlled by MDOC, emergency authority to shut down unsafe housing units, full subpoena power for records and staff testimony, whistleblower protections, independent medical oversight, criminal penalties for knowingly concealing dangerous conditions or falsifying records, immediate relocation authority when conditions threaten human life, and inclusion of community advocates and impacted families in oversight discussions.

"We cannot continue creating systems where agencies investigate themselves while people get sick, suffer, and die," Love says. "Transparency without consequences is not accountability."

The push for broader reforms comes as Clark, a 42-year-old mother of four, continues to deteriorate inside Women's Huron Valley. Clark says years of exposure to black mold have left her struggling to breathe, partially paralyzed, and unable to walk without assistance. Medical records previously reviewed by *Metro Times* showed Aspergillus, a potentially dangerous fungus, in her ears and lungs.

Recent photos reviewed by *Metro Times* show severe discoloration and deterioration around Clark's ears.

In April, nine state lawmakers and a coalition of human rights groups, pastors, and local elected leaders urged Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to grant Clark medical clemency before she dies. For more

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than a year, Whitmer's office declined to answer *Metro Times*' questions about Clark's condition and mold complaints at the prison. Her office previously declined to answer *Metro Times*' questions about conditions at the prison, but after the recent deaths, a Whitmer spokeswoman said the governor directed MDOC to conduct a swift, thorough, and transparent investigation and release the results publicly.

"The health and safety of those under MDOC's supervision must always be their top priority," Whitmer spokeswoman Stacey LaRouche said last month. "That's why MDOC Director Washington is personally working out of the facility for the foreseeable future, increased the number of health care professionals on site, and will ensure health and safety standards are met."

State Rep. Dylan Wegela, a Garden City Democrat who visited the prison, said he saw mold in the showers and ceiling and met with Clark.

"After meeting with Krystal, there is no mistaking that the conditions at Huron Valley are killing her," Wegela said. "I personally saw black mold growing out of both of her ears. I'm worried that if action is not taken soon, her health will continue to deteriorate."

The governor's office said it would be premature to assign blame before investigations are complete.

MDOC has repeatedly denied that Women's Huron Valley has dangerous, systemic toxic mold problems. Spokeswoman Jenni Riehle previously told Metro Times that MDOC recently worked with an independent, certified expert to complete comprehensive environmental testing at the prison and that the findings were consistent with expected results typically found in large settings where people live and work.

"Claims suggesting that the facility has dangerous, systemic, black or toxic mold conditions are simply false," Riehle said.

But court filings, testimony, and a recent state report have painted a far more troubling picture.

In a June 24 order allowing most of a federal lawsuit over prison conditions to move forward, U.S. District Judge Stephen J. Murphy III summarized allegations that the facility is overrun with mold.

"Huron Valley is infested with mold," Murphy wrote. "The mold eats through bricks and door frames. It drips off the ceiling. It falls out of air vents. It bubbles and bursts through paint."

Murphy also described allegations that prisoners were forced to clean mold without basic supplies.

"At the same time, inmates, lacking even paper towels or mops, have resorted to scrubbing cells with menstrual pads," Murphy wrote. "One guard went so far as to order inmates to scratch the mold off shower tiles with their fingernails."

The recent deaths have deepened concerns about medical care and oversight at the prison.

Howard died May 13, about two weeks before she was expected to be released. Her mother, Shaquillia DeShields, previously told *Metro Times* that Howard had schizophrenia, appeared to be in crisis, had lost weight, was often in a wheelchair, and believed someone had put blood in her food. DeShields said she repeatedly contacted prison officials asking for help and a wellness check.

"They are in there killing those people," DeShields said.

Four days later, Fackler died at the prison. A woman incarcerated near her told *Metro Times* that Fackler was in pain, not feeling well, and crying out for help, but no one came until it was too late.

"I heard Becky asking for help, her needs being ignored, and the officer who was to be doing rounds did not look in on her at all after she went to her cell," the woman said. "Not one round was she confirmed to be OK. They are supposed to visually confirm every 30 minutes. I am certain she died on second shift and not on the shift she was discovered hours later."

MDOC has said both deaths remain under investigation and that foul play is not suspected. Riehle previously said onsite staff began lifesaving measures and medics were called, but attempts to revive the women were unsuccessful.

Washington, first appointed by Republican Gov. Rick Snyder in 2015 and reappointed by Whitmer in 2018, has been working out of the women's prison since the recent deaths. She is the longest-serving member of Whitmer's cabinet.

Advocates say replacing one official or expanding the existing ombudsman's office will not be enough unless the state creates independent oversight with enforcement power.

"This legislation was never about politics. It was about human life," Duckworth said of the Krystal Clark proposal. "Women have continued to suffer while many in power delayed action. We presented lawmakers with real policy solutions because the conditions inside Women's Huron Valley demand urgent intervention — not silence, avoidance, or performative concern."

Survivors Speak's proposal was drafted after years of reports involving toxic mold exposure, unsafe living conditions, alleged medical neglect, retaliation, and deteriorating infrastructure.

The organization says lawmakers must act before more women die.

"We cannot continue to normalize suffering simply because it is happening behind prison walls," Love says. "This legislation was designed to create oversight, transparency, and accountability where those systems have failed."

—Steve Neavling MT

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Deadbeat Beat (from left: Zak Frieling, Maria Nuccilli, Pete Steffy, and Alex Glendening) hanging out in Hamtramck. JOSH BERRY

The Beat Goes On

THE PERSEVERANCE OF DETROIT'S DEADBEAT BEAT

By Jeff Milo

"The most fun fight we've ever had," Maria Nuccilli says, "was when Alex jumped out of a moving car while I was driving."

"In Rochester, New York," Alex Glendening half-shouts, "by the flagship Wegman's store."

"But, we were over it pretty quickly," Nuccilli clarifies. "I was just in a bad mood because I had lost a beloved pin."

"But then she got it back," Glendening reveals.

Glendening is the lead singer and guitarist of the Detroit-based indie-pop quartet Deadbeat Beat. Nuccilli is not only the drummer and backing vocalist, but also, along with Glendening, the band's co-founding member. They've known each other since they were teenagers, which wouldn't surprise anyone who spends more than five minutes in the vicinity of their delightfully chaotic banter percolating with callbacks to a dense shared history that sounds enviably zany or cute (like leaping out of cars to win a fight). They've been playing in bands together for 20 years (16 of those years with Deadbeat Beat), and can be described as having a sibling dynamic.

"I think that's a really big strength, though," says bassist Zak Frieling, who's been their bandmate for 11 years now, but has known them even longer. That sibling energy, he says, "lends itself to this band having a really deep core, which I've been thinking a lot about lately."

To a moderate degree, they've all been thinking about what's at the core of their band, because they're about to release a new album, and then head out for tour. But there might be more at stake this time.

During our conversation, a variation on the phrase "we'll make it work" comes up often, but it's not exactly in line with the scrappy platitudes we typically associate with the DIY ilk. Because Deadbeat Beat isn't improvising any duct-tape fixes or relying on hot-wired impulsiveness anymore, or at least not as much. Now they're more focused on clear-headed sustainability, on solidarity (more than ever), and on resolutely moving forward despite the varying degrees of hellish trials they've separately and collectively endured over the last six years.

Speaking of "work," though, Frieling and Nuccilli have been hard at it lately, sending out 20 emails a day to get their tour booked. It's unglamorous and draining, but imperative for supporting a new record. The latest, *From Here to Ohio*, the band's fourth full-length, comes out Friday, and yes, the phrase alludes to touring, which they've done a lot of over the years, and is something that's certainly stocked up some core memories for them.

"Tour can sometimes mostly be finding parking spots, carrying heavy gear, figuring out where you're gonna sleep," Frieling says, and Nuccilli jumps in, "and not finding 'the good trail mix' at the gas station." Frieling seamlessly continues, "and then a little bit of fun, playing music." To which Glendening quickly adds, "a *lot* bit of fun playing music... but it's not for that long."

"I'm excited to do some touring," says keyboardist Pete Steffy, the self-described "new addition" to Deadbeat Beat (he joined in late 2022). "What I like about this band, in addition to admiring all three of you as musicians, is that you're all people who I would want to go on a trip with, anyway."

This is sort of a typical Monday night for Deadbeat Beat. They're assembled around the dining room table of Steffy's North End home, where he lives with his wife and two toddlers. Tonight they're swapping vegan cookies and sparkling water, but they'd otherwise be practicing in the basement while Steffy keeps an ear out for any murmurings from the baby monitor.

Like anyone on the other side of 35, their lives are denser now — buying houses, getting married, having kids, sustaining day jobs, settling in but not quite settling down. Their fortitude has also been significantly tried and tempered, especially for its founding members, enduring prolonged caregiving and end-of-life care for loved ones. "There's been a lot of big life-stuff," Steffy says, "and seeing bandmates taking care of family members with failing

health, how difficult and selfless that is but still making it their priority, was really inspiring." Through all the life stuff that came their way and all the life stuff yet to come, they kept a balance informed by the closeness of their relationships.

Their lives, now, don't revolve around the band — they don't have to, despite how idealized that notion sounds. Maybe part of the magic of their longevity is that they managed that balance so well: the band never became their lives — their lives became the band.

Catchy, honest, deceptively deep

"When I think back on working with them, I just remember lots and lots of laughter," says Chris Koltay, a world-renowned producer and musician who recorded and engineered *From Here To Ohio* in his Corktown-based High Bias Studio. "It seemed like whenever we got together, it was everyone's safe space. And not in some ceremonial, cheesy, or affected way. Everyone in the band has a really good sense of humor, and they just all really love each other. And they've been a band for so long that that's all kinda baked into the cake, and that makes making records easier when a band has a palpable thing going on that's not manufactured."

Koltay has been working with bands for more than 25 years, and has probably recorded thousands at this point, so it's kinda big when he says, "I think [*From Here To Ohio*] is up there with some of the best stuff I've worked on in my career."

He says he particularly appreciated finding a mutually satisfying process and flow with Glendening. "You have a principal songwriter in this band who could really only be described as gifted," Koltay says. "Alex is so creatively restless in the most beautiful way — he's touching up the painting on the way to the opening exhibit."

"I don't stop writing," Glendening says, then laughs, "and I also never finish."

Frieling adds, "But, for as long as I've been in the band, there's never been a time when [Alex's] lyrics aren't worth the wait."

Not long after wrapping with Koltay, the band got signed to We Are Time Records, a Vancouver-based label owned by Chandra Oppenheim and Ryan Dyck that's been around for more than a decade. "I was already a fan," Dyck says. "I listened to [the band's last release] *How Far* a lot when it came out, and I was surprised at how much they kicked [*Ohio*] into overdrive. The harmonies are huge and complex, and the addition of organs and keyboards adds another dimension. You can tell they are connoisseurs of pop music."

Singer-songwriter and producer Matthew Smith has been a fan for 20 years, back to when Glendening and Nuccilli were in the Decks, a precursor to Deadbeat Beat, and also produced the latter's first album, 2017's *When I Talk To You*.

"[Alex's] lyrics," says Smith, "and [the band's] energy became an expression of a complicated psychological landscape, while the melodies and harmonies could be as upbeat as Jan and Dean. The tension between those kinds of opposing forces tends to make great pop music."

Singer-songwriter Linda Ann Jordan, of Pretty Island, used to be in a band with Nuccilli and has shared several stages with DBB over the years. She says that "their catchy, honest, and deceptively deep songs capture the feeling of yearning to drive to Belle Isle and jump in the Detroit River."

"Alex and Maria have a kind of Warhol Factory edge to their musical approach," says Smith, "which I think is unusual coming from the East Side suburbs where a lot of musicians are more into blues and hard rock. Alex plays lead guitar like someone who's never owned an Eric Clapton record, but has maybe listened to a lot of Velvet Underground and Buffalo Springfield. Maria's drumming reminds me of early Motown, the Ventures, Hal Blaine, and basically that whole universe. Maybe living in the same neighborhood as Patti Smith had an effect on them?"

Maria Nuccilli and Alex Glendening. DOUG COOMBE

"Their music," Jordan adds, "provides the perfect soundtrack for growing up in and around Detroit and coming of age in an incestuous but rich music scene."

"From the beginning, it seemed like Alex was writing about Grosse Pointe the way Lou Reed would write about New York," says Smith.

Modulated and confident

Deadbeat Beat have always made downright charming music, or at least that's how it hits, at first. Bright, jangly tones from vintage-style guitars, tumbling toms and snappy snares, driving bass lines and, now, keyboards adding catchy flourishes by way of understated countermelodies. The keys can stray into minor and the solos can get cathartically feral, but there's always a slick surfy grace to it all, with the endearingly complementary harmonies between Glendening and Nuccilli seasoning pretty much every single song.

Spin the songs again and again, and dig more into the lyrics, and things can get heavy, wistful even, or just gut-punch blunt. Over 20 years of songwriting, Glendening has been intentional about how much autobiographical material to sprinkle in, if any at all. Asked if they're drawn from his exceptional capacity for memory and memoir-grade anecdotes, he quips, "hmm, lies and fables..." But he later expounds:

"The lyrics, now, are a little bit less *I do this / I do that*, though a little of that will probably always be in there. But it's really not about myself, and I think that's always been true. I'm doing more with the lyrics. It's like a synthesizer: you have a signal, and everything after that signal gets modulated. I think that's what I do with my source text. Sometimes they might start off about me, but then they go around the corner, but by the time I'm done with them, I'm just the guy who opened the door. So if I'm singing about an experience, I am playing with it, and I feel I'm better at it [on *Ohio*] than I've been on other records, not that I think I was good at it before."

The word "melodramatic," as a compelling frame to lean into for its own sake, comes up when they discuss their honest forays into pop that hits as atypical. "I think of the early Leslie Gore hits that [Alex] and I loved when we first started making music," Nuccilli says. "Melodrama's beautiful," Glendening follows. "The Shangri-Las!? You hear *that,* and you *don't feel something*?"

"There's lots of music," Steffy says, "that we all like that doesn't do stuff like that, but I think our songs sound simpler and happier than they are."

"I think they're more complex lyrically and musically than if you just catch the tail end of them on the radio," Frieling says. "I think Alex's lyrics have always been political in a personal way, and now they're more directly talking about the perils of the world."

"Over our working relationship," Nuccilli says, "I've seen Alex grow more confident as a lyricist, and especially the last round of writing for [*Ohio*]. He's more confident in his choices and willing to play around with language."

"If I could be completely oblique as a songwriter or musician, I would be," Glendening says. "But it's just not my voice yet. One day I'll evolve into a crustacean and make *musique concrète*, but it's just not happening yet, as much as I want it to. I love music without words; I've loved atonal music my whole life, but at the same time I also love '50s soda jerk music."

Frieling knows that it's always going to be tricky, and if not impossible, to control how a band is perceived, despite the complexities of the members' individual influences and musical DNA. "I think nowadays," he says, "rock bands are very successful if you can describe them in one word."

"Not to be like: *my pop band is so different from everyone, we defy labels*," Nuccilli starts, "'cause that's not what I'm saying here: But sometimes you hear a band or artist and struggle to put it into a category." She then references the defiantly eccentric solo work of Julian Cope as an indirect inspiration. "That spirit of not being identifiable as a scene stands out for me."

Any band with this many years and adventures is bound to get a little reflective, and dare we say: sentimental, especially when they each remark upon personal and collective milestones they've reached, along with the aforementioned tough life experiences they've endured.

And, now, "instead of worrying I've wasted my youth," Glendening says, "I've realized, *no, this is exactly what I wanted to do*."

"I've worried about that too, at points," Nuccilli adds. "Especially with our DIY ways, like, *was I focusing my energy in the right way?* We were just doing the best with what we had, and now, a couple of decades into it, here we are! And, I'm proud of what we've created together."

"I'm really excited for our record release show," Frieling says as he checks off their pre-tour to-do list. "The record will be here, it's gonna be good — it'll be cool to have on vinyl, and people are gonna like it, and if they don't..."

"Hopefully they'll hear it soon," Nuccilli says.

"If you don't hear our record — *grow up*!" Glendening shouts.

"You can't put sarcasm in print, like that, Alex," Nuccilli says.

Alex says, "I think that one will work."

Deadbeat Beat will perform a record release show with Lightheaded and AM People starting at 8 p.m. on Friday, June 12 at Paris Bar, 2961 E. McNichols Rd., Hamtramck; parisbardetroit.com. Tickets are $10 advance, $15 at the door. MT

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WHAT'S GOING ON

LISTINGS

Select events happening in metro Detroit this week. Be sure to check venue websites before all events for the latest information. Add your event to our online calendar: metrotimes.com/AddEvent.

MUSIC

Wednesday Jun 10

Live/Concert

Boney James 7:30 pm; The Aretha Franklin Amphitheatre, 2600 E. Atwater St., Detroit;

Cubist Agenda 8 pm-midnight; First Place Lounge, 16921 Harper Ave, Detroit; No Cover.

Execution Day, A Sense of Purpose 6 pm; Sanctuary Detroit, 2932 Caniff St., Hamtramck;

Eyelet, Locktender, Dead Hour Noise, It Happened One Night, A Grim Existence 6 pm; TSDMAAC (Confessional), 15701 James Couzens Fwy., Detroit;

The Function with DJ Dez Andres 9 pm-2 am; Northern Lights Lounge, 660 W. Baltimore St., Detroit; no cover.

Jazzy Nights 2026 Season Pass 7:30 pm; The Aretha Franklin Amphitheatre, 2600 E. Atwater St., Detroit;

Rare DM with special guests TBA 7 pm; Small's, 10339 Conant St., Hamtramck;

Villanelle 7 pm; The Shelter, 431 E. Congress St., Detroit;

Cubist Agenda 8 pm-midnight; First Place Lounge, 16921 Harper Ave, Detroit; No Cover.

The Function with DJ Dez Andres 9 pm-2 am; Northern Lights Lounge, 660 W. Baltimore St., Detroit; no cover.

DJ/Dance

Planet Funk 7-10 pm; Spkr Box, 200 Grand River, Detroit;

Way Back Wednesdays w. DJ Righteous 8 am-11:59 pm; New Dodge Lounge, 8850 Joseph Campau Ave., Hamtramck; 5.

Karaoke/Open Mic

Hump Day Karaoke & Music Trivia 8 pm-1 am; Pronto! Royal Oak, 608 S. Washington, Royal Oak; No Cover.

Thursday Jun 11

Live/Concert

Born Without Bones 6 pm; Sanctuary Detroit, 2932 Caniff St., Hamtramck;

Citizen Kane 7 & 7:30 pm; The Token Lounge, 28949 Joy Rd., Westland;

Dueling Pianos: An Interactive Entertainment Experience 8 pm-midnight; AXIS Lounge, 1777 3rd St., Detroit;

Firehouse Sessions: Bob Mervak 6-9 pm; The Apparatus Room in Detroit Foundation Hotel, 250 West Larned Street, Detroit;

Live at Saint John's: Peter Mayer 6:30-8 pm; Saint John's Resort, 44045 Five Mile Rd., Plymouth; $30.

XMEMORIESTOBURNX, Brittle Bullet, Black Bagged, Wind for Wings 6 pm; TSDMAAC (Confessional), 15701 James Couzens Fwy., Detroit;

Dueling Pianos: An Interactive Entertainment Experience 8 pm-midnight; AXIS Lounge, 1777 3rd St., Detroit;

DJ/Dance

Curated Cool 7-10 pm; Spkr Box, 200 Grand River, Detroit;

Karaoke/Open Mic

Drag Queen Karaoke 8 pm-2 am; Woodward Avenue Brewers, 22646 Woodward Ave., Ferndale; no cover.

Elixer: DJs John Ryan and GEO 8 pm-midnight; Northern Lights Lounge, 660 W. Baltimore St., Detroit; No cover.

Friday Jun 12

Live/Concert

Allele 6:30 & 7:30 pm; The Token Lounge, 28949 Joy Rd., Westland;

BOSS BBQ 2026 at Batch Brewing Company 4 pm; 10 Critics, 1400 Porter St., Detroit;

Friday Night Jam — Live Music at The Wildermere Featuring The Jerome Clark Trio 8-midnight; The Wildemere Bar & Grill, 3143 W. Mnichols, Detroit, MI; Free.

Jake Hoot 8 pm; Andiamo Celebrity Showroom, 7096 E. 14 Mile Rd., Warren;

JIMMY EAT WORLD - 25 YEARS OF BLEED AMERICAN 7 pm; Michigan Lottery Amphitheatre at Freedom Hill, 14900 Metropolitan Pkwy., Sterling Heights;

Kawaii Rave 9 pm; Pike Room, 1 S. Saginaw, Pontiac;

Kickstand Productions Presents: Neoni - HOW TO KILL A FAIRY-TALE TOUR 7 pm; Magic Bag, 22920 Woodward Ave., Ferndale;

Michigan Rock Fest 2026 6 pm-midnight; Diesel Concert Lounge, 33151 23 Mile Road, Chesterfield; $15-$20.

Moravian 7 pm; Orchid Theatre, 141 W. Nine Mile Rd., Ferndale;

The Prestige Eatery & Entertainment Presents Award-Winning Jazz Vocalist Sky Covington Live in Concert 8-11 pm; The Prestige Eatery & Entertainment, 22925 W 8 Mile Rd, Detroit, MI; 15.00.

The Prestige Proudly Presents: Sky Covington Live in Concert 8-11 pm; The Prestige Eatery & Entertainment, 22925 W 8 Mile Rd, Detroit, MI;

Saddle Up: Rodeo Rave 8 pm; Diamondback Music Hall, 49345 S. Interstate 94 Service Dr., Belleville;

Summer Concert Series At Festival Park 5-8 pm; The Village of Rochester Hills, NE corner of Walton and Adams, Rochester Hills;

Summer Sounds at The Mall at Partridge Creek 5-8 pm; The Mall at Partridge Creek, 17420 Hall Rd., Clinton Township; Free.

Woodbridge Pub Presents: Live Music Under the Stars ; Woodbridge Pub, 5169 Trumbull St., Detroit; Free.

Summer Concert Series At Festival Park 5-8 pm; The Village of Rochester Hills, NE corner of Walton and Adams, Rochester Hills;

Summer Sounds at The Mall at Partridge Creek 5-8 pm; The Mall at Partridge Creek, 17420 Hall Rd., Clinton Township; Free.

Woodbridge Pub Presents: Live Music Under the Stars ; Woodbridge Pub, 5169 Trumbull St., Detroit; Free.

Summer Concert Series At Festival Park 5-8 pm; The Village of Rochester Hills, NE corner of Walton and Adams, Rochester Hills;

Summer Sounds at The Mall at Partridge Creek 5-8 pm; The Mall at Partridge Creek, 17420 Hall Rd., Clinton Township; Free.

Woodbridge Pub Presents: Live Music Under the Stars ; Woodbridge Pub, 5169 Trumbull St., Detroit; Free.

Friday Night Jam — Live Music at The Wildermere Featuring The Jerome Clark Trio 8-midnight; The Wildemere Bar & Grill, 3143 W. Mnichols, Detroit, MI; Free.

Woodbridge Pub Presents: Live Music Under the Stars ; Woodbridge Pub, 5169 Trumbull St., Detroit; Free.

Woodbridge Pub Presents: Live Music Under the Stars ; Woodbridge Pub, 5169 Trumbull St., Detroit; Free.

DJ/Dance

Ann Arbor Ecstatic Dance second Friday of every month, 7:30-10:30 pm; Ringstar Studio, 3907 Varsity Dr, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48108, Ann Arbor; $25-40 ($5 discount for cash).

Cocktail Shake + DJs Jam Jam & Josh 9 pm; Bowlero Lanes & Lounge, 4209 Coolidge Hwy., Royal Oak; 0.

Open Air Fridays 4-10 pm; Woodbridge Pub, 5169 Trumbull St., Detroit; 0.

Karaoke/Open Mic

Harlem Nights: The Kingdom Karaoke Experience 5:30-9 pm; Fellowship Chapel, 7707 W. Outer Dr., Detroit; 45.00.

Saturday Jun 13

Live/Concert

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Summer Concert Series At Festival Park 5-8 pm; The Village of Rochester Hills, NE corner of Walton and Adams, Rochester Hills;

Summer Sounds at The Mall at Partridge Creek 5-8 pm; The Mall at Partridge Creek, 17420 Hall Rd., Clinton Township; Free.

Woodbridge Pub Presents: Live Music Under the Stars ; Woodbridge Pub, 5169 Trumbull St., Detroit; Free.

A FLOCK OF SEAGULLS wsg Dr. DeLorean and the Space Invaders 7 pm; District 142, 142 Maple St., Wyandotte;

An Evening with Wilco 8 pm; Meadow Brook Amphitheatre, 3554 Walton Blvd., Rochester Hills;

Blink 2002 - 25th Anniversary of Take Off Your Pants and Jacket 7 pm; The Loving Touch, 22634 Woodward Ave., Ferndale;

Country Hoedown 2026 9 pm; Diamondback Music Hall, 49345 S. Interstate 94 Service Dr., Belleville;

Finality / Voyag3r / Centenary / Nekronik / Aspen Sanctum 6:30 pm; The Token Lounge, 28949 Joy Rd., Westland;

Headless Mary, Melodic Canvas, Basket Case 7 pm; Sanctuary Detroit, 2932 Caniff St., Hamtramck;

I Hate My Friends, Hello Moon, Joyful Forfeit, I Survived, Rec League 6 pm; TSDMAAC (Confessional), 15701 James Couzens Fwy., Detroit;

Summer Concert Series At Festival Park 5-8 pm; The Village of Rochester Hills, NE corner of Walton and Adams, Rochester Hills;

Summer Sounds at The Mall at Partridge Creek 5-8 pm; The Mall at Partridge Creek, 17420 Hall Rd., Clinton Township; Free.

The Cab 6:30 pm; Pike Room, 1 S. Saginaw, Pontiac;

The SoapGirls with special guests Choking Susan and more 7 pm; Small's, 10339 Conant St., Hamtramck;

Turnpike Troubadours 7 pm; Michigan Lottery Amphitheatre at Freedom Hill, 14900 Metropolitan Pkwy., Sterling Heights;

Woodbridge Pub Presents: Live Music Under the Stars ; Woodbridge Pub, 5169 Trumbull St., Detroit; Free.

Woodbridge Pub Presents: Live Music Under the Stars ; Woodbridge Pub, 5169 Trumbull St., Detroit; Free.

Summer Sounds at The Mall at Partridge Creek 5-8 pm; The Mall at Partridge Creek, 17420 Hall Rd., Clinton Township; Free.

DJ/Dance

Saturday Grind 11 am-3 pm; Spkr Box, 200 Grand River, Detroit;

Saturday Grind 11 am-3 pm; Spkr Box, 200 Grand River, Detroit;

Sunday Jun 14

Live/Concert

Woodbridge Pub Presents: Live Music Under the Stars ; Woodbridge Pub, 5169 Trumbull St., Detroit; Free.

Woodbridge Pub Presents: Live Music Under the Stars ; Woodbridge Pub, 5169 Trumbull St., Detroit; Free.

Extreme Sports, Empties, Hondo, Sea Hag 6 pm; TSDMAAC (Confessional), 15701 James Couzens Fwy., Detroit;

Magic Bag Presents: The Avengers 7 pm; Magic Bag, 22920 Woodward Ave., Ferndale;

Parker Barrow 7:30 pm; The Token Lounge, 28949 Joy Rd., Westland;

Phil Ogilvie's Rhythm Kings 5-8 pm; Zal Gaz Grotto Club, 2070 W. Stadium Blvd., Ann Arbor; No Cover (tipjar for the band).

Woodbridge Pub Presents: Live Music Under the Stars ; Woodbridge Pub, 5169 Trumbull St., Detroit; Free.

Woodbridge Pub Presents: Live Music Under the Stars ; Woodbridge Pub, 5169 Trumbull St., Detroit; Free.

Phil Ogilvie's Rhythm Kings 5-8 pm; Zal Gaz Grotto Club, 2070 W. Stadium Blvd., Ann Arbor; No Cover (tipjar for the band).

Woodbridge Pub Presents: Live Music Under the Stars ; Woodbridge Pub, 5169 Trumbull St., Detroit; Free.

Woodbridge Pub Presents: Live Music Under the Stars ; Woodbridge Pub, 5169 Trumbull St., Detroit; Free.

DJ/Dance

SPKR BRNCH 11 am-3 pm; Spkr Box, 200 Grand River, Detroit;

Karaoke/Open Mic

Sunday Service Karaoke Hosted by Sister DJ Larry 8 pm-1 am; Pronto! Royal Oak, 608 S. Washington, Royal Oak; No Cover.

Sunday Service Karaoke | DJ Larry noon-1 am; Pronto! Royal Oak, 608 S. Washington, Royal Oak; No Cover.

Monday Jun 15

Live/Concert

Sky Covington's Preservation of Jazz Monday Night Music Series, Tributes 7:30-10 pm; Aretha's Jazz Cafe, 350 Madison St., Detroit; $35-$40.

Sky Covington's Preservation of Jazz Monday Night Music Series, Tributes 7:30-10 pm; Aretha's Jazz Cafe, 350 Madison St., Detroit; $35-$40.

DJ/Dance

Adult Skate Night 8:30-11 pm; Lexus Velodrome, 601 Mack Ave., Detroit; $5.

Tuesday Jun 16

Live/Concert

Dexter and The Moonrocks 8 pm; Magic Stick, 4120 Woodward Ave., Detroit;

ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN: More Songs To Learn & Sing 7 pm; The Fillmore, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit;

Gxllium, Flowers For Persephone, callmetheBoxer..., Insearchofbastila, sixteen12swag 6 pm; Sanctuary Detroit, 2932 Caniff St., Hamtramck;

Sean Blackman's In Transit 7-10 pm; Northern Lights Lounge, 660 W. Baltimore St., Detroit; no cover.

Taking Back Sunday w/ Bayside 7 pm; Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak;

Gxllium, Flowers For Persephone, callmetheBoxer..., Insearchofbastila, sixteen12swag 6 pm; Sanctuary Detroit, 2932 Caniff St., Hamtramck;

Sean Blackman's In Transit 7-10 pm; Northern Lights Lounge, 660 W. Baltimore St., Detroit; no cover.

Karaoke/Open Mic

Open Mic : Art in a Fly Space 7-10 pm; Detroit Shipping Company, 474 Peterboro St., Detroit; no cover.

VIP Tuesday Night Karaoke 9 pm-1 am; Pronto! Royal Oak, 608 S. Washington, Royal Oak; No Cover.

Wednesday Jun 17

Live/Concert

Cubist Agenda 8 pm-midnight; First Place Lounge, 16921 Harper Ave, Detroit; No Cover. MT

Selden Standard. STEVE NEAVLING

Bites

Iron Chef Detroit returns with Selden Standard defending title against Grey Ghost

Iron Chef Detroit is returning to Eastern Market this month with a matchup between two of the city's most celebrated chefs.

The third annual culinary competition will take place from 6-9 p.m. Thursday, June 11, 2026, at Eastern Market's Shed 5, where Cass Community Social Services will once again turn the venue into a "Kitchen Stadium" for a live, three-round cooking showdown.

This year's event pits reigning Iron Chef Detroit champion Andy Hollyday of Selden Standard against challenger John Vermiglio of Grey Ghost, Basan, Second Best, and Little Ghost.

Carlos Parisi, a host, influencer, and entrepreneur, will return as co-host. He will be joined by Jon Kung, chef and author of *Kung Food*. Judges include award-winning chefs Mamba Hamissi of Baobab Fare and Anthony Lombardo of SheWolf and Medusa, along with author, director, activist, and Detroit Poet Laureate Jessica Care Moore.

During the competition, the chefs will be required to incorporate a secret ingredient, which will be unveiled live. At the end of each timed round, the chefs will present dishes to the judges, who will determine the winner.

Guests will also be able to sample food and drinks from more than 20 tasting tables featuring metro Detroit restaurants.

General admission tickets are $50 in advance at ironchefdetroit.com and $60 at the door. Food and drinks are included with admission.

The event benefits Cass Community Social Services, a Detroit nonprofit that provides emergency food, affordable housing, health care services, job training, and other support for vulnerable residents. The organization says its mission is "Fighting Poverty, Creating Opportunity, Building Community."

—Steve Neavling

Wright & Company calls it quits

Wright & Company, an acclaimed restaurant in downtown Detroit that racked up national recognition since in opened in 2014, announced it will close for dinner service this summer.

In a social media post, the eatery said its last dinner service will be July 3.

"For more than a decade, you've made us part of your first dates, anniversaries, celebrations, late-night cocktails, and countless unforgettable evenings," the post continued. "What started as a restaurant became a gathering place, and that's because of the people who walked through our doors."

It added, "To every guest, team member, friend, and neighbor who has been part of this journey, thank you. Your support, loyalty, and memories have shaped Wright & Company into what it is today."

The restaurant says that though dinner service is ending, it will remain open for private events for the time being.

Wright & Company opened in 2014. Helmed by chef and co-owner Marc Djozlija and known for its small plates an craft cocktails, the restaurant earned a James Beard Award semifinalist nomination in the Best Chef: Great Lakes category, as well as kudos from *Food & Wine* magazine. In a review, *Metro Times* declared Wright & Company "probably unmatched downtown." It specialized in New American-style small plates.

The restaurant is owned by the Detroit Optimist Society hospitality group, whose Detroit holdings also include Sugar House, Bad Luck Bar, Honest John's, Grandma Bob's, Last Chance Saloon, Time Will Tell, Third Street Bar, and El Trombone. Earlier this year, the Detroit Optimist Society announced plans to reopen its recently shuttered Mutiny Tiki Bar in another part of the city.

—Lee DeVito MT

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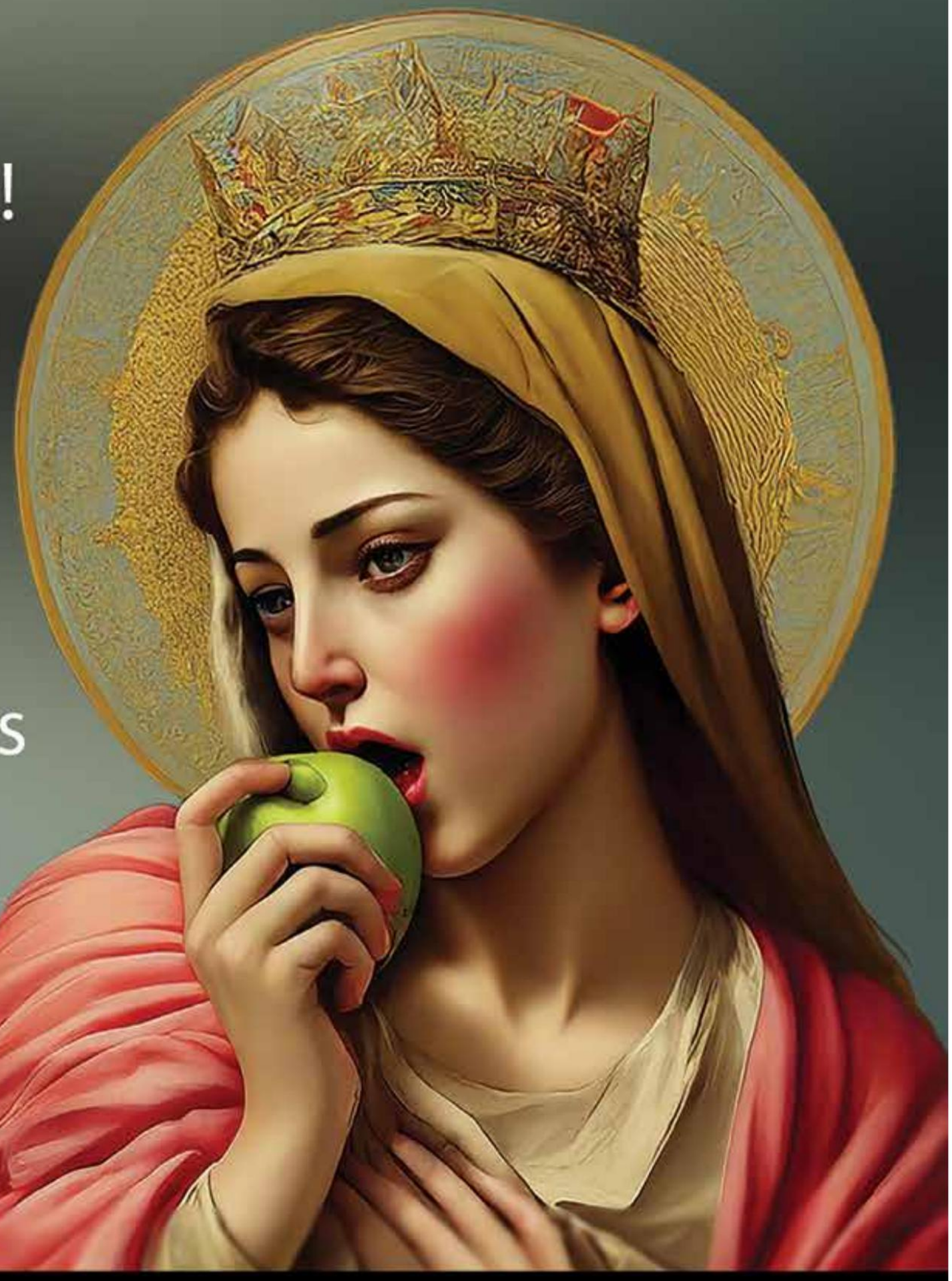

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Babyfxce E.

KAHN SANTORI DAVISON

Flint's newest rap star

Babyfxce E's rise to hip-hop fame

By Kahn Santori Davison

Babyfxce E is standing outside Midtown's Majestic Theatre with fellow emcees Tay-B and Baby Money. The trio are talking beats and rhymes as the 23 year-old Flint native prepares to headline his first ever tour (titled "Da Realest"). The first show was initially scheduled to be held at EL Club in Southwest Detroit but moved to the Majestic due the need for a bigger capacity venue. In February, Babyfxce E released his debut studio album of the same, *Da Realest*. *Pitchfork* says the album has, "more jokes, quirks, and personality than ever before" and Babyfxce E calls the project one of his two favorites.

"...it's between [mixtape] *Real Striker Music* or *The Realist*," he says. "That's my debut album. I was talking crazy on that one, too. It's out of them two, though. They're my two favorites."

Before Babyfxce E was Flint's newest rap star, he was born Efrem Blackwell, a graduate of Atherton High School who grew up on fishing, hunting, and hip-hop.

"I was listening to a lot of Cash Kidd, Sada Baby, FMB DZ, GT, Babyface Ray.... even Banggang, Dex Osoma," he says.

Babyfxce E had never considered becoming a rapper and started to lean more toward involvement in the streets after high school. But one day in the summer of 2021 a friend invited him to the studio, one thing led to another, and he encouraged him to get behind the mic.

"I made a decent little song, everybody fucked with it," he says nonchalantly.

That one track didn't mean he saw himself as an emcee, but his friends certainly did. As early stages of his career started to unfold, his friends encouraged him and gave him the name Babyfxce E.

"I kind of just accepted it because I was coming up with a rap name to drop a song, but I couldn't come up with one," he says. "Everybody was like, 'you got Babyface'. So we just came up with Babyfxce E, and I changed it by putting the X instead of the A."

As the months went by he began to record and release music starting with singles the "Reaper," and "No patience." On Jan. 1, 2022 he dropped "Six Flags" and the entire hip-hop scene took notice as the song became his first to reach a million views on YouTube. He dropped his first mixtape *Life of The Reaper* that following spring and a year later his single, "D Rose" off his *Its With a X* mixtape garnered two million YouTube views.

"Them were the ones that really kicked everything off," he says regarding his two singles. "It was a good feeling because I was really surprised. Like, dang, people were really listening to my music, you know what I'm saying? Like, you can hear it, it's on people's [Instagram] stories, it was a good feeling."

Historically Flint's hip-hop scene has always had just as much talent as Detroit's. Flint-born MC Breed was one of the midwest's first rap stars with his 1991 hit single, "Ain't No Future in Yo' Frontin" off his *20 Below* debut album. Two years later he followed it up with one of the most notable collaborations with 2Pac, "Gotta Get Mine" off *The New Breed*. The Dayton Family carried the baton to the early 2000s and by the late 2010s, artists Loui Ray, YN Jay, RMC MIke, and Rio Da Yung OG had crafted a new sound that built a nationwide cult following. Babyfxce E says he's proud to be a part of Flint's hip-hop lineage and even more honored to stand alongside the artists he used to look up to.

"It feels good to contribute to it," he says. "Like, I'm one of them, too, now, you know what I'm sayin', even though I used to listen to them before I even thought about being a rapper."

As Babyfxce E's hip-hop career was excelling, he still had one foot in the street life which led to him being incarcerated on three different occasions. When asked if he ever had that proverbial moment when he decided he was done with the streets, he says, "You always have that moment every time you go to jail. Every time you go, you're going to think that every time."

Ultimately, Babyfxce E says he realized he owed it to himself, his family, and his supporters to completely move on from any involvement in illegal activities. Hip-hop had changed his life financially to where there simply wasn't a need.

"...it's just like now it would just be disappointing if I'm getting in trouble for shit I used to do that I don't have to no more," he adds. "I got them counting on me."

What makes Babyfxce E stand out is this natural charisma he's able to bring to his street narrative bars. He's authentic, clever, and tough, but not intimidating to the point where you aren't able to have fun listening to his music.

On the street bouncy "Tell the Truth" he raps,"Glocky used to be a plain jane, it's a switchy now / I done finally got up in that lane, I ain't switchin' out."

And on daunting "ProdbyFxce" he's in full attack mode: "How you say you love me and you don't even know my government?/ Bullets shoot so hot, you can't even stop it with no oven mitt. /Fuck a *XXL* break, I need the cover, bitch."

"My flow plays a big part of that too," he says. "I be on some humble shit, but I got the swag, though. You know what I'm saying? Like, I got it. I got the flow, I got the cadence, I got the voice, The females love me. So I got all that and like, it's all kind of hard to beat," he confidently adds.

As 2024 rolled in, Babyfxce E earned a spot in Apple Music's Artists to Watch program and was named Audiomack's "10 Rappers You Should Know Right Now." On March 4 of that same year Atlantic Records announced they had signed him to a record deal.

"All the labels were reaching out to me. We went on like an eight-month label run before I signed," he says.

Babyfxce E says despite the objective opinions people have about signing to a major record label, it has its advantages and you have to make sure you're up on your business savvy as well as your work ethic.

"Everybody always thinks it's going to be a 360 deal. I mean, it all depends on what you allow to happen. So you got to just have the right people around you," he says. "And you got to want to stay hungry, too. If you ain't staying hungry for this shit, they ain't going to keep pushing it. You gotta care more than they do."

Babyfxce E's 2026 hasn't slowed down. This past March he performed at the *Billboard* House at SXSW, he was named one of "15 Artists to Watch in 2026" by *Billboard*, and one of "26 Rappers to Watch in 2026" by *Complex*. He feels the biggest mistake aspiring artists make when they're young is being hesitant to take mild risks and thinking they'll always have time to pursue their goals.

"Don't be scared to make moves," he says. "And what I mean by that is I feel like when you're young, you just bank on you being young. Like, hey, I'm young.I still got time but you don't."

Babyfxce E will perform as part of the Hart of Detroit Summer Festival on Friday, June 19. The event is noon-11:30 p.m. on Friday, June 19 at Hart Plaza; eventbrite.com. Tickets start at $65.87. MT

KAHN SANTORI DAVISON

The Hart of Detroit Summer Fest returns for Juneteenth hip-hop celebration

The second annual "Hart of Detroit Summer Fest" will kick off at noon on Friday, June 19 at Hart Plaza. The festival was launched last spring with the aim of celebrating both Juneteenth and Detroit's hip-hop music scene.

This year's headliners are Detroit rappers Kash Doll and Babytron, and New Jersey native Fetty Wap. Other notable Detroit acts include Charity, Shorty Da Prince aka Reggie Son, Tone Tone, K Deezy, Tay B, Baby Faxe E, Baby Money, Bruiser Wolf, Damedot, and Boldy James.

"Usually I go with an all-Detroit line-up, but dates weren't aligning with my normal acts. So I started working through different things," says festival organizer Chanel Domonique. "Detroit is one of the top five markets for Fetty Wap's audience and his fans. So I'm really excited to be able to bring him here and his fans to be able to experience it while also taking in the love of Detroit."

One of the biggest upgrades from last year's festival is the addition of two of Detroit's gospel music biggest stars, Shana Wilson and Kierra Sheard.

"When you think about Detroit and the birth of sound, the birth of Motown, the birth of even techno music — gospel has always been a part of that," says Domonique.

The Hart of Detroit Summer Fest has joined other music festivals of a variety of genres held throughout the summer at downtown Detroit's riverside park including the Movement Music Festival in May, African World in July, Ribs and R&B in August, and Detroit Jazz Festival in September. Along with music, the Black Male Initiative is sponsoring a civic engagement camp to encourage voter registration, Berry Green Products is sponsoring a leisure Camp for attendees ages 21 and up, and financial guru Chris Sain is sponsoring a space for local merchants called the Mitten Makers Market.

"You know, at most festivals you get the normal vendors," Domonique adds. "But this is the Mitten Makers Market where if you're a small business, whether it's food or a dry vendor, you are a part of this conversation."

Dominique says she's proud of the effort she put into last year's festival, but she wants attendees to have an even better experience this year. Much like this year's Movement festival, Hart Plaza was plagued by on-and-off rain showers.

"We want to make sure everybody has a great experience versus the experience last year," she says. "We had good feedback and then we also had things we couldn't control, but this year, we're making sure everybody's prepared."

—Kahn Santori Davison

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This body horror film doubles as a razor-sharp takedown of toxic co-dependency and the "nice guy" myth. FOCUS FEATURES

Film

The new golden age of horror

By Jared Rasic, Last Word Features

Obsession

Rated: R
Run-time: 109 minutes

I don't think this is a very controversial statement, but we are living in the golden age of horror movies. We exist in a time where a grimy, bluesy vampire movie like *Sinners* can become the most Oscar-nominated film in history and a bonkers, singular vision like *Weapons* can nab Amy Madigan her first Best Supporting Actress at 75 years old.

With the recent release of Curry Barker's horror masterpiece *Obsession*, fans are experiencing a genre renaissance unlike anything we've seen since the dawn of modern horror in the early 1980s.

Contemporary filmmakers are treating horror for what it really is: a limitless playground for developing ideas built around what scares us about being alive. From *Hereditary*'s disturbing deconstruction of the limitations of grief to the trans metaphor of *I Saw the TV Glow* to the treatment of demonic possession as a drug addiction in *Talk to Me*, there isn't a single concept that can't be explored through a scary lens.

First, I would love to put a moratorium on the term "elevated horror." While all horror movies are most certainly not created equal, acting like *The Witch* elevates the genre because it treats its subject more "seriously" than something like *The Toxic Avenger* completely misses the point. It's a label invented by people who are secretly ashamed of loving genre films — acting a security blanket for cinephiles who need to pretend a movie is a grief metaphor just to justify enjoying a good scare. Horror didn't suddenly become respectable because A24 applied a muted color palette to it.

Still, when a film like *Obsession* comes along, it's easy to see why people reach for that vocabulary. It takes a trope-heavy subgenre — the supernatural wish gone wrong — and updates it into a devastatingly sharp relationship allegory. Yet, even with all of its intellectual bona fides, the film remains a rollercoaster of disturbing moments, belly laughs, and pulse-pounding intensity. It goes a long way toward proving horror doesn't need to be glacially paced and dour to be important.

The setup of *Obsession* is deceptively simple. We follow Bear (played with pitch-perfect, beta-male awkwardness by Michael Johnston), a music shop employee hopelessly stuck in the friend zone with his co-worker and best friend, Nikki (a truly, profoundly astonishing Inde Navarrette). Desperate to change their dynamic, Bear buys a cheap novelty trinket called a "One Wish Willow" from a local hippie shop. In a moment of frustration, he snaps it and wishes that Nikki would love him more than anyone else in the world.

He gets exactly what he asked for and it's far more disturbing than the basic "Monkey's Paw" setup suggests. Nikki immediately becomes obsessed with Bear, turning unhinged and unable to be apart from him for even just a few moments. Working as a pointed critique of toxic co-dependency and the hidden lie of the "nice guy" trope, *Obsession* has a ton to say about modern relationships and hook-up culture. It left such a layer of grime on me that I felt genuinely uncomfortable for an hour after the credits rolled.

What positions *Obsession* at the absolute peak of contemporary genre filmmaking is its shifting perspective on who the real monster is. Barker's script is far too smart to leave it at a simple "crazy girlfriend" cliche. As Nikki's behavior spirals into terrifying physical and psychological territory, the camera turns its gaze back onto Bear himself. We watch a man trapped in a prison he constructed, yet he remains deeply complicit. Even as Nikki's mind and body visibly curdle under the weight of the spell, Bear's entitlement and need for validation keep him from breaking it. That quiet complicity becomes just as chilling as Nikki's manic "love."

The film works beautifully thematically, but it functions even better as a jaw-dropping, wildly unpredictable body horror. Navarrette delivers a powerhouse performance that deserves the same accolades and flowers showered upon Toni Collette in *Hereditary*. I'm not exaggerating when I say this is one of the most transcendent horror movie performances in history and Navarrette deserves to be on the Mount Rushmore of horror heroines alongside Collette, Isabelle Adjani in *Possession*, and Florence Pugh in *Midsommar*. She shifts effortlessly from a facsimile of the perfect millennial girlfriend to a twitching, bone-grinding entity, hungrily watching Bear sleep from the shadows. This is an instantly, unequivocally iconic performance.

Barker, who also edited the film, proves he has an immaculate eye for slow-burn dread. He relies heavily on practical effects and deeply unsettling lighting to make Nikki look entirely inhuman without detaching her from reality. Aside from a few slightly weird story beats, Barker, at 26, has made a near-perfect film and inspired me to finish writing the horror script gathering cobwebs in my head. I have a feeling there is no upper limit to what Barker can do.

In a year already packed with great genre offerings like the underrated *28 Years Later: The Bone Temple*, the spooky throwback *Hokum*, the quietly disturbing *Undertone*, the gooey maximalism of *The Mummy* and *They Will Kill You*, and the gleefully unhinged *Ready or Not 2* and *Send Help*, we still have so much to look forward to.

Coming up we have the A24 genre-bender *Backrooms*, the absurdist *Buddy*, a new franchise entry with *Evil Dead Burn*, the queer nightmare *Leviticus*, the Jessica Chastain-led *Other Mommy*, Zach Creggar's follow-up to *Weapons*, a *Resident Evil* reboot, Robert Eggars's *Werwulf*, the incredibly cast *Sender*, the epic-looking *The End of Oak Street*, and so many more.

It's the golden age of horror. One thing is for sure: when we look back at this era and explore the movies that pushed the genre forward and changed the game of cinema, *Obsession* will be at the top of the list. I don't mean to overhype it, so just make a wish you never read this and head straight to the theater. Nikki is waiting for you.

Grade: A- MT

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Fewer people are visiting dispensaries in Michigan as the cannabis industry continues to struggle. STEVE NEAVLING

The straight dope

Michigan treated cannabis like a piggy bank, and the revenue grab is backfiring

Michigan's decision to treat its already struggling cannabis industry like a piggy bank for road repairs appears to be backfiring, with tax revenue falling far short of expectations as marijuana sales continue to fall.

Four months into the state's new 24% wholesale tax, Michigan has collected less than $34 million, according to a new state Treasury report. That's less than a third of the roughly $105 million the tax would need to generate each quarter to meet the $420 million annual estimate lawmakers relied on when they approved the controversial levy last year.

The shortfall is not a surprise to cannabis businesses, which spent months warning Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and lawmakers that Lansing was squeezing an industry already struggling to survive. They argued the tax would bankrupt businesses, force large layoffs, drive consumers toward the illicit market, and ultimately reduce the revenue the state was trying to collect.

Whitmer and a bipartisan majority of lawmakers ignored the warnings and pressed forward.

The 24% wholesale tax, which took effect on Jan. 1, was part of Whitmer's latest attempt to deliver on her 2018 promise to "fix the damn roads."

The levy is in addition to the existing 10% retail excise tax and 6% sales tax on cannabis, and it's imposed when marijuana is first sold or transferred from a licensed grower to a dispensary.

Under the law, the tax is paid by cultivators when cannabis is first sold or transferred to a dispensary. But the cost can be baked into the price they charge dispensaries, which in turn may pass some of the increase on to customers. The added layer, industry leaders warned, would raise prices in a market already struggling with oversupply and falling margins.

Adult-use marijuana sales from January through April were lower than the same months in 2025 and 2024, according to data from the Cannabis Regulatory Agency. In January, the first month under the new tax, recreational sales fell to $226.4 million, an 8.2% decline from a year earlier and the lowest monthly total since February 2023.

The next three months remained below 2024 and 2025 levels.

For an industry already battered by falling prices, oversupply, shrinking margins, and business closures, the wholesale tax added another blow.

More than 900 cannabis licenses have become inactive since adult-use sales began in Michigan. Operators have reported layoffs and closures as the market continues to slump.

Once one of Michigan's fastest-growing job creators, the $3-billion-a-year industry is struggling to hold onto its more than 41,200 workers. From 2018 to 2024, the industry accounted for roughly 52% of net private-sector job creation in Michigan, an impressive feat for a sector that represents about 1% of total private employment, according to *Crain's Detroit Business*.

Now some lawmakers are regretting their decision to impose the tax, but Whitmer has been steadfast in her support. In March, a bipartisan group of state senators introduced legislation to repeal the tax, saying it was already damaging businesses and costing jobs. The bill is sponsored by Republican and Democratic lawmakers, including Sens. Jonathan Lindsey, Jeff Irwin, Jeremy Moss, Sylvia Santana, John Bumstead, Roger Hauck, Joe Bellino, and Jim Runestad.

Lindsey, R-Coldwater, said at the time that Lansing was trying to take more money from an industry that couldn't afford it.

The Michigan Cannabis Industry Association has also sued the state, arguing the wholesale tax is unconstitutional because it effectively amends the voter-approved law that legalized recreational marijuana without the three-fourths supermajority required by the Michigan Constitution.

The lawsuit is not the only controversy surrounding the tax.

Whitmer's administration has refused to fully release an internal Cannabis Regulatory Agency memo from November 2023 that analyzed the potential impact of a similar marijuana tax, the *Detroit News* reported in April. The heavily redacted memo appears to address how higher taxes could affect the industry and whether they could drive consumers back to the illegal market.

The state has argued the redactions were lawful. But the secrecy has raised obvious questions about what the administration knew before pushing the tax and whether lawmakers were warned that the policy could backfire.

Metro Times previously obtained a separate state report showing officials expected cannabis tax revenue to decline, though the report did not explain why.

From the start, the wholesale tax has raised serious questions about transparency. In September, with no warning or opportunity for the public to comment, the state House approved the measure with bipartisan support in a 78-21 vote.

Whitmer's administration has also declined to comment on the wholesale tax revenue.

Meanwhile, legislators have not touched the 4% liquor tax since it was set in 1985. That may be because the liquor industry has one of the most powerful lobbies and has donated heavily to Whitmer and other lawmakers.

Now, months into the wholesale tax, the numbers are undermining the state's gamble that cannabis businesses could absorb a heavier tax burden.

—Steve Neavling

Muha Meds launches giveaways

Cannabis brand Muha Meds is rolling out two giveaways in Michigan, including one with a cash prize and another that includes a new Dodge Challenger.

Muha Meds is partnering with Lume dispensaries on a giveaway for $15,000. Customers can earn one entry for every minimum $10 purchase at Lume, then download the Muha Members app, create an account, and upload a receipt to enter. The Lume promotion runs through June 15.

A separate statewide giveaway ups the ante with a $25,000 cash prize and a new Dodge Challenger. The promotion runs through 11:59 p.m. July 30, with the winner expected to be announced Aug. 3 through the Muha Members app.

To enter, customers who buy a Muha Meds all-in-one vape at a dispensary will receive a "golden ticket" with a QR code. They must download the Muha Members app to complete the entry.

Dispensaries can also participate through the wholesale side of the promotion. Retailers that purchase wholesale cases receive 50 entries, though that portion of the giveaway is not open to the public.

Muha Meds says the app also offers rewards, exclusive events, and other promotions.

—Steve Neavling

Macomb County processor accused of having more than 12,000 untracked products

Michigan cannabis regulators are seeking fines or other sanctions against a Harrison Township processor accused of having more than 12,000 marijuana products that were not tracked in the state's monitoring system, including some in California packaging.

The Cannabis Regulatory Agency filed a formal complaint May 29 against VJAS 1 LLC, which operates an adult-use marijuana processor business at 41525 Production Drive, Suite C, in Harrison Township.

During an unannounced inspection on Feb. 12, CRA staff found several marijuana products without Metrc tags or any identifying information showing where they came from, according to the complaint. An inventory audit determined that more than 12,000 individual marijuana products lacked Metrc tags or other identifying information.

Some of the untracked products were in California packaging that displayed the letters "CA" and included warning information specific to California, the complaint says.

The CRA said two employees, identified in the complaint only as inventory manager T.H. and purchasing agent A.K., could not explain why the products lacked Metrc tags or where the items in California packaging came from.

Regulators also found marijuana products with Metrc tags that were supposed to be at other licensed cannabis businesses, according to the complaint. In one example cited by the CRA, a product found at VJAS 1 had a Metrc tag indicating it should have been physically present at another licensed marijuana business.

The CRA said its audit found 459 packages that were improperly tracked in Metrc.

The complaint accuses VJAS 1 of four violations of Michigan's cannabis rules, including failing to accurately enter inventory and transactions into the statewide monitoring system, possessing marijuana products not recorded in Metrc, having marijuana products without required tags or labels, and failing to consistently identify and track products.

The CRA said it intends to impose fines or other sanctions, which could include suspension, revocation, restriction, or refusal to renew the company's license.

VJAS 1 has 21 days after service of the complaint to request a hearing. The company also has the right to request an informal compliance conference with regulators.

The complaint does not say whether the untracked products were sold to consumers or whether regulators believe the products came from outside Michigan's licensed cannabis market.

—Steve Neavling

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HUMP DAYS
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w/ DJ's JOHN RYAN &
NICK KOTHARI
No Cover / 8pm / 21+

FRIDAY JUNE 12
LOWER REGIONS
TODD MODES / RYAN SPENCER
/ HYPEMELO
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LOREN / DEY J. / SINA
/ ERIKK RAPHAEL
ADVANCE TICKETS
ON RA / 9pm / 21+

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DEZ ANDRES
presents
SOIREE SUNDAYS
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CULTURE

Savage Love

Quickies

by Dan Savage

Q: *I'm a woman living with a supportive, caring man. We've been together — on and off — for 20 years. The sex is always hot when we get back together. Then, after a year, the sex fades to nothingness. I believe the problem is that hot "reunited" sex only turns me on for a while and then I crave a more passionate, erotic connection, which is not his thing. He's a wham-bam kind of guy. This time around, after we didn't have sex for a year, he had an affair. I was devastated. Help?*

A: Break up with him for cheating on you, get back together when (or if) you can forgive him for cheating on you, then dump him when the sex has started to fade but before he cheats on you again. Then start the cycle over again.

Q: *Will hooking up and having fun while single lessen my hunger for an LTR? I'm horny!*

A: I met my husband doing something fun and sleazy (drunken one-night stand in Seattle) and I met my boyfriend of 12 years doing something fun and sleazy with my husband (sex dungeon in Berlin). So, if you go into your hookups with the right mindset — your fun hookup partner might make a great life partner — you could wind up finding the LTR you want while you're having the fun you need.

Q: *Should I take on a summer lover even though I really want a partner?*

A: Yes!

P.S. Don't use that word — it's gross.

Q: *I got on a dating app and pretty much instantly matched with the couples counselor I saw with my ex. This feels unethical. Am I right?*

A: It's not unethical for a couples counselor to get on dating apps and — according to the American Psychological Association — it's not unethical for a mental health provider to date a former client provided more than two years have elapsed since the client/provider relationship was terminated. (There are, of course, other considerations.)

P.S. I'm assuming this person "swiped right" on you and that weirded you out. If your pictures aren't recent and/or aren't representative, there's a chance your former counselor didn't recognize you. There's also a chance your former counselor is a creep. You aren't required to see this person just because you matched on an app. If this is giving you the icks, block 'em.

Q: *What's the most creative way you've ever heard of someone ending a relationship honestly?*

A: I've seen some extremely dramatic breakup videos — people confronting cheating partners with evidence of an affair, sometimes at the altar in front of family and friends — but those breakups strike me as performative, vindictive, and (perhaps) deeply satisfying, but not "creative." And I'm not even sure what a "creative" breakup would look like or why someone would want to get creative with a breakup. Breakups should be simple and direct, not elaborate staged. The flashmob proposal fad was bad enough — do we want to live in a world with flashmob breakups?

Q: *Thinking about staging an old-school flashmob wedding proposal. Good idea or not? And if not, why not? Is there a reason people don't seem to do them anymore?*

A: "Do it," said a good friend who staged a flashmob wedding proposal that went viral a decade and a half ago. "The worst that could happen is your partner says no and you're humiliated in front of a bunch of people. The second worst is they say yes and then leave you for someone else after you're married — you'll still be humiliated, but in front of fewer people." (Full disclosure: My friend's partner said yes, married him, and then left him for someone else. Still, he has no regrets — not about his marriage or about the flashmob proposal he organized.)

Q: *What do gay men think of shirt-cocking? Women of all orientations seem to be united in our disgust of the practice, but are there any gay men who think it's hot? I'm all for shirtless and naked men, but shirt-cocking is just...well, gross, in my estimation.*

A: I have something of an in-house expert when it comes to shirt-cocking, aka "Donald Ducking," which is when a man wears a t-shirt and nothing else.

"I love it," said Terry Miller, my husband and a huge fan of shirt-cocking. "Maybe it was an old locker room moment that imprinted on me. But there's something about a hot guy in a cropped tee and a Speedo or naked from the waist down. Fucking hottest thing ever."

My husband, of course, speaks for all gay men everywhere.

Q: *What are your thoughts on the film Thanks for Sharing?*

A: Do you mean the 2012 romantic comedy about sex addicts starring Mark Ruffalo and Gwyneth Paltrow? Haven't seen it. No spoilers!

Q: *Navigating the kink scene online as a professional (educator)... is it possible? Is it silly to share pics?*

A: Thomas Rosengren was an award-winning sixth grade teacher in Minnesota — he was one of eleven finalists for the state's teacher of the year award — when a rightwing "news" website found some PG-13 pics of him in leather and posted them. Rosengren was promptly fired. This didn't happen in 1996 — it happened in 2026. So, while it's definitely possible to navigate the kink scene as a professional educator, you'll need to be very careful about where you post your pics and who you share them with.

Q: *I've never heard you talk about my kink: hotpast. Some people get turned on by listening to their partners talk about the sex life they had before they met. Like most men, I started out jealous if my girlfriend mentioned anything about her past. But as our relationship progressed — my girlfriend is now my wife — it became a turn on for me. I know I'm not alone. It's hotwifing light!*

A: Since sharing stories about previous sexual experiences is sometimes a gateway to cuckolding, I shared your letter with Hopeful Cuck, one of the hosts of the Cuck My Life podcast. If this is a kink, Hopeful and his crew would know about it. If it didn't already have a name, Hopeful and his crew could make it happen.

"I dropped this question into the hive mind," said Hopeful. "'Complimentary Compersion,' and 'retrocompersion' got tossed out as other possible names for this kink, but we all agreed that 'hotpast' is the best name for it. For some men, this might be a stand-in for 'actual' cuckolding. So many men can't imagine their wives sleeping with someone new but get turned on by the idea that she used to sleep with new guys. It's also a much safer option for women. Is it a gateway? Probably not for all, but it can be a first step for some! We love the idea!"

The Cuck My Life podcast — the podcast by cucks for cucks (and other adjacent people) — is available on all podcasting platforms.

Q: *Is it normal for my orgasms to get stronger the older I get?*

A: It's normal for you, you lucky bastard.

Q: *Dating a friend's ex: out of bounds or fair play?*

A: Fair play. Setting up a friend with your ex? God-level play.

P.S. Friends don't blindside friends. If you're dating your friend's ex, do the right thing and tell them yourself. Don't let them find out about it from a mutual or — even worse — from social media.

Q: *Great sex with my ex who says he could never be in love with me again? Yes or no?*

A: I would be happy to have great sex with your ex — if he's hot. (What's his Insta?)

P.S. My editor gently suggested that you might be asking whether you should have great sex with your ex again and not whether I would like to have great sex with your ex. If that's the case, my advice would be... as my advice so often is... it depends. Fucking an ex who doesn't love you when you still love them keeps an already existing wound open and could leave you with another, even deeper wound when your ex inevitably moves on. For your own sake, having mediocre sex with someone else is probably a better idea than having great sex with your ex — assuming you were asking about yourself and not offering your ex to me.

Q: *Monogamous heterosexual here. I do anal with my GF and I wanna donate blood. Should I lie on the form?*

A: If you're having anal sex in the context of a monogamous relationship that has been going on for longer than three months, you're allowed — gay or straight — to donate blood, no lies required.

Q: *I lived with a close female friend last year. Her boyfriend entered the picture while we were living together, and she started showing disordered traits. When she started having tantrums when she didn't get her way, I moved out. When I returned to grab something I left behind, she was full on crying, and then got mad when I didn't show her any empathy. I haven't talked to her in six months, she reaches out monthly about other stuff I left, and I always tell her to give it away or toss it. Should I keep this friendship closed? She has no friends now, and the last friend she lived with also moved out early, and isn't friends with her anymore, but she is friends with some of my other friends.*

A: You aren't obligated to stay in touch with someone you find unpleasant — even if the source of their unpleasantness is the result of an untreated mental illness you aren't qualified to diagnose.

P.S. So, she has no friends... except for the friends you have in common?

Q: *I am a 70-year-old, cisgender, closeted bisexual man. I've been happily married to a woman for forty monogamous years. My wife is very accepting of gays but has no empathy for bisexual people, which is the reason I haven't told her. She occasionally takes trips with family without me. During those trips I spend a lot of time with a friend of mine in a similar sit-*

uation. My feelings for my friend are deep. My friend and I have agreed to no sex and to not doing anything that would be considered cheating. What is your opinion on what is possible for us — feelings or more — but wouldn't be considered cheating?

A: Does my opinion really matter? The issue is the wife and her opinions — which have kept you in the closet for the last 40 years. If you don't want to cheat, you'll have to wait until you're a widower to do anything remotely sexual with your similarly situated friend.

P.S. Bisexual and happily married to a biphobe for forty years?

P.P.S. No butt stuff.

Q: *A terrible thing happened to me. I fell in love with a guy — and then found out he was sent to prison and isn't getting out. I am heartbroken. I refuse to speak to him ever again because of what happened. I also have never been too lucky with men. I work so hard all the time, and I never seem to get the right outcome. I just can't wait to get over this broken heart. Will I ever feel normal again?*

A: Reading between the lines... you can't have known this person very well (or for very long) if you only found out he was in legal trouble after he was sent to prison. If he was someone you met online, you weren't so much in love with him as you were in love with the possibilities he represented. I'm not trying to minimize your feelings — the pain you're in is real — but the cliché applies: time heals all wounds. And falling in love with someone and getting your heart broken isn't proof that you'll never find love — it's proof that you can.

Q: *There's this one guy whom I'm convinced is going into a lavender marriage! I want to say something at the top of my lungs on Facebook. Maybe he's bi, and maybe there's some femmephobia going on in me, but goddam, this guy's gayer than a thong on gay cruise ship. I'm angry for multiple reasons. Why are women so fucking stupid?!?*

A: Let's not confuse one version of a lavender marriage — a loving companionate marriage between an openly gay man and a woman who knows he's gay and doesn't care (maybe she wants kids, maybe she's asexual, maybe she wants a husband who would never cheat on her with another woman) — for the actions of the kind of selfish and/or deluded closet case who uses a woman as a human closet. If it's a lavender marriage, you can and should STFU. If this woman is a friend and you suspect she's about to marry a selfish and/or deluded closet case, you should reach out to her personally — as a friend — and not post something to Facebook.

Q: *I'm a poly woman with a burdensome secret. Someone I was dating for several years let me know that he regularly had unprotected sex with other partners and did not tell his wife. At the time he told me this (a couple years ago), I was in a pretty bad place mentally and I wasn't in a place to tell her. Now, it's been a year and I'm strong enough I think I could bear the messy fallout. But I'm unsure. They've got kids, it's possible he's no longer doing this, it's possible she's gotten on board with him having unprotected sex with others. It's also possible that if I share this information, I get pushed out of the small town ENM community in which he and I co-exist. What do you think?*

A: "If this had been a one-night stand two years ago that the writer harbored guilt about, I would have cited the principle of does this help or hurt and might have landed on keeping silent because it would only hurt the wife — but this is not that," said Natalie Davis, author of *Saying Yes: My Adventures in Polyamory* and the editor of Polyamory Today. "And I have to say the husband was selfish to put his then-partner in a co-conspirator role against the wife. WTF? That is not the poly way! As for what to do now, assuming good intentions by the writer — the safety of the wife and his other partners against STIs, the risk the husband could father a child, and the overriding ENM goal of honesty and open communication — I would suggest that they meet with the husband and the wife together. Engage in nonviolent communication. Calmly state the facts — what the husband told the writer, her discomfort at the time with the information and her inability to take action for whatever reason then. What happens next is for the husband and wife to navigate."

Follow Natalie Davis on Instagram @ NatalieDavisAdventures.

Q: *I'm a 38-year-old woman. My husband claims he's bisexual. He hasn't been interested in sex with me for several years, he sends dick pics and videos to other men on Snapchat, he sought out a gay doctor ("they're better doctors"), and he is addicted to poppers and male porn. I'm pretty sure he's just gay, otherwise wouldn't he be more interested in me or at least cheating on me with other women. I feel like I have no choice but to leave him and like I was just his beard. Please tell me what to do.*

A: DTMFA.

P.S. Also, reading Kelly Foster Lindquist's *Beard: Memoir of a Marriage* will make you feel less alone. MT

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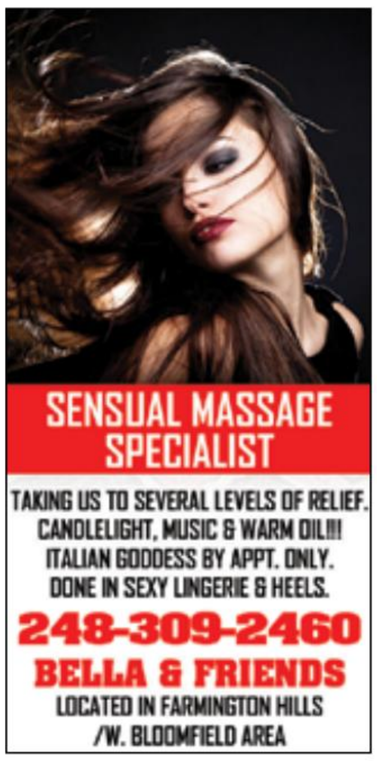
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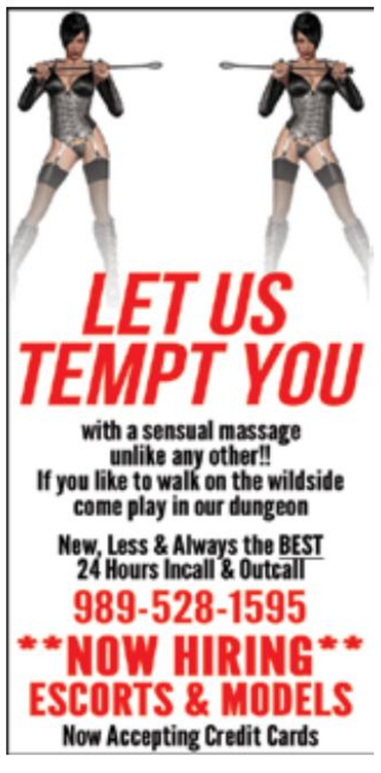
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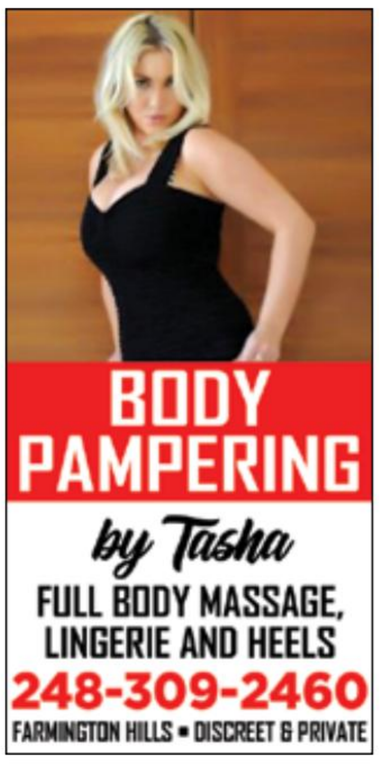

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Free Will Astrology

By Rob Brezsny

ARIES: March 21 – April 19
Many of you have a fraught relationship with discipline. You recognize you need it if you want a life rich with epic adventures. Yet you sometimes resist planning ahead or organizing your resources, fearing it might dampen your immediate pleasures. The problem is that when you skip the planning and organizing, the short-term fun you default to may turn out to be unsatisfying. That's the challenging news. The encouraging news is that you're now in a cycle when you can transform how you relate to discipline. I bet you can render some of those old patterns obsolete.

TAURUS: April 20 – May 20
Gemologists evaluate opals less for flawless uniformity than for their mesmerizing play-of-color. They study how light interacts with a stone's microscopic internal structure to produce vivid, shifting hues. The most prized opals aren't necessarily the most perfect in shape, but the ones whose internal pattern and rainbow-like displays are most vibrant, varied, and alive. This is a marvelous metaphor for you in the coming weeks. I hope you don't obsess on consistency or smooth away your complications. Let the world see your play-of-color.

GEMINI: May 21 – June 20
"Dear Oracle: Why do we always have to start at the beginning? I'd much prefer just jumping into the middle of things. Right now, I would love to bypass all the tedious baby steps I'm being forced to take as I try to get some momentum going. Please slip me a few clues about how to fast-forward directly to the fun stuff. —Bored with the Groundwork." Dear Bored: Your timing is perfect. The planetary omens say you are now authorized to vault over the preludes and prologues and dive right into the heart of the action.

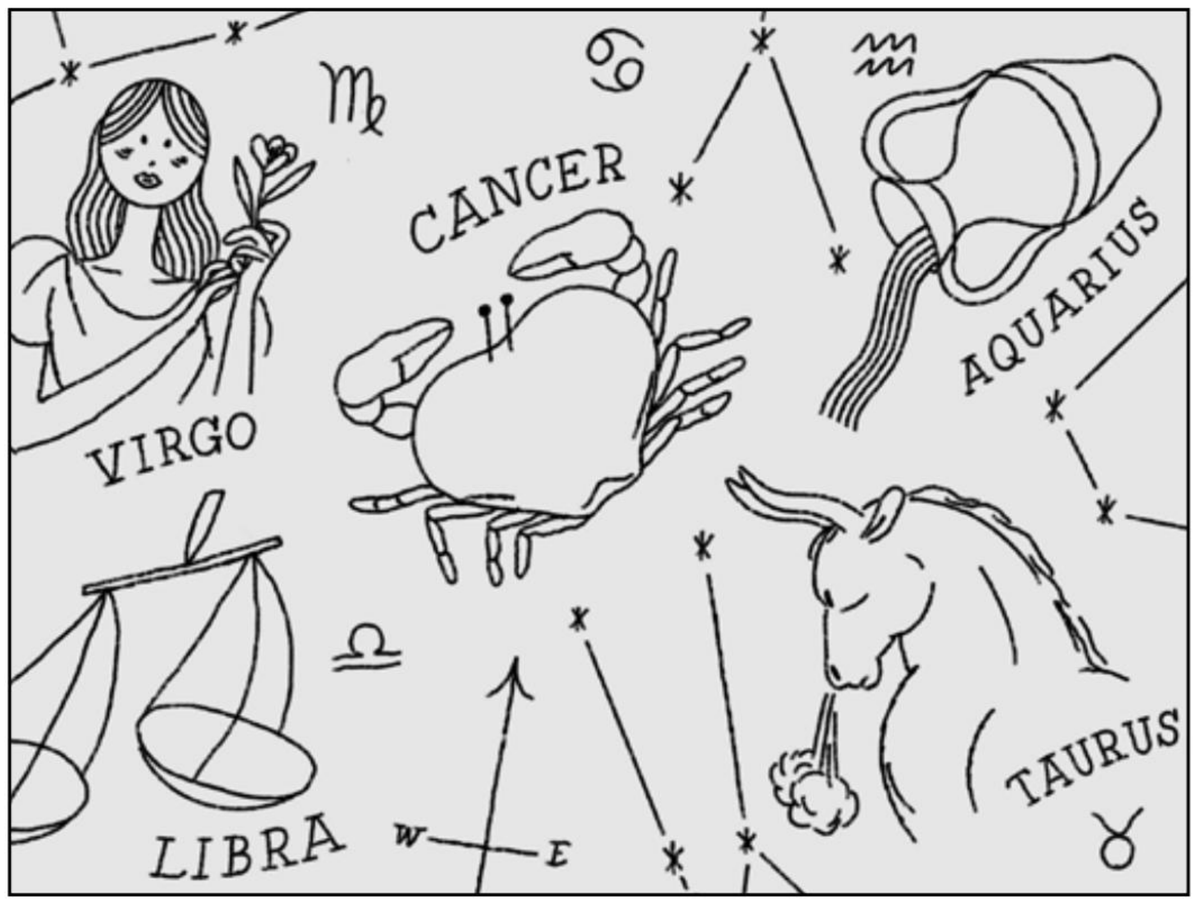
CANCER: June 21 – July 22
Restoration ecologists work to revive damaged prairies. They've discovered that seeds of many native plants can lie dormant in the soil for years, waiting for the right conditions to germinate. If they remove invasive species and restore the land's natural cycle of controlled fire, wildflowers long absent from the landscape spring back to life. With this metaphor in mind, Cancerian, consider what dormant possibilities may lie buried in your own psyche. What seeds did you plant long ago and then forget? What dreams or talents are waiting for you to clear away the choking overgrowth and create space for them to emerge? Old potentials may be patient, not dead.

LEO: July 23 – August 22
Better than any other sign, you understand that ego and generosity can be collaborators rather than enemies. Your charismatic radiance is often a public service. When you express your interesting beauty, you give others permission to tap into their own luminosity. The world always craves your unique flavor of audacious joy, and especially now. The rest of us need your intense insistence that flair and flamboyance are forms of resistance against the forces that would diminish life's splendor.

VIRGO: August 23 – Sept. 22
Many people struggle with what could be called "imagined ugliness," a condition clinicians refer to as body dysmorphic disorder. It usually involves fixating on a supposed physical defect, or even on a flaw that exists only in one's mind. I suspect that almost everyone carries a trace of this tendency, including you and me. The good news, though, is that the current astrological climate is ideal for you to at least partially shatter its spell. You are poised to transform your self-image so vigorously that you begin to regard yourself as a flawless exemplar of quirky, one-of-a-kind beauty.

LIBRA: Sept. 23 – Oct. 22
The Golden Gate Bridge, which is a few miles from my home, is painted continuously. Painters start at one end, work their way across, and by the time they reach the other side, it's time to start over. The job is never finished; maintenance is the permanent condition. Some people find this depressing, but I find it oddly liberating. It means the bridge doesn't have to achieve some final, perfect state. It just has to be tended. Similarly, you don't have to fix everything once and for all, Libra. The relationships, projects, and internal states you're concerned about aren't meant to reach completion. You shouldn't worry about trying to finish what's meant to be an ongoing practice. Just keep starting the cycle again.

SCORPIO: Oct. 23 – Nov. 21
Innovative theater director Viola Spolin was a Scorpio. She taught that the best scenes emerge when the actors avoid trying to control outcomes. Instead, they fully commit to the reality they're creating together. Spontaneous responses are their gold standard. Let's make this a keynote for you in the coming weeks. Your assignment is to give yourself heartily to improvisation. The most interesting magic will happen as you relax into the collaborative process, trusting it to guide you toward beauty and meanings none of you could have scripted alone.



JAMES NOELLERT

SAGITTARIUS: Nov. 22 – Dec. 21
Musicologists distinguish between "perfect pitch" and "relative pitch." A person with perfect pitch can sing or identify a specific note without hearing any other music beforehand. Relative pitch is the ability to recognize musical notes in relation to other notes. In the coming weeks, Sagittarius, relative pitch will be a more useful metaphor for you than perfect pitch. Don't insist on perfect clarity about what's right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, worthy and unworthy. Instead of obsessing on fixed standards, practice relational discernment. How does this choice feel compared to that one? How does a person behave in this context versus another? For you right now, truth lives in the intervals and connections.

CAPRICORN: Dec. 22 – Jan. 19
The best way to eliminate a bad habit is to replace it with a good one. Now is an excellent time to acquire more expertise in this art. Start by choosing a specific habit that drains your energy, time, or self-respect. Then identify what that habit is secretly trying to give you, like comfort, distraction, or a sense of control. Your mission is to find a healthier behavior that offers a similar payoff without the damage. For example, maybe you go online and binge-scroll through bad news because you imagine it soothes your anxiety. Instead of that, read an uplifting book or listen to serene music for a while. Be concrete: When the itchy habit hits, what exactly will you do as an alternative?

AQUARIUS: Jan. 20 – Feb. 18
In 1905, 26-year-old Albert Einstein worked full-time as a clerk in a Swiss patent office. During his off-hours, he wrote four audacious papers that fundamentally changed how physics understood space, time, light, and matter. He accomplished his revolution without the sponsorship of a renowned university or laboratory. His example suggests that we can perhaps re-imagine and recreate the world even if we're not supported by glamorous circumstances. I suspect this principle applies to you these days. Breakthrough insights and earth-shaking realizations may arrive while you're doing ordinary tasks. Be alert for the flashes that arise in seemingly routine and modest situations.

PISCES: Feb.19 – March 20
For linguists, "untranslatable" words are concepts that exist in one language but have no equivalent in others. One example is *mono no aware*, which in Japanese refers to the tender poignance and appreciation you feel in the presence of fleeting beauty, like cherry blossoms falling. I bring this to your attention, Pisces, because I suspect that you, too, are untranslatable right now. My advice is to forget about trying to get others to grasp what's going on with you. Here's a suggestion that might help: Find soulful artists and emotionally intelligent creatives who speak the language of your mystery.

Homework: *What gifts do you have that you have never yet given with fullness?* MT

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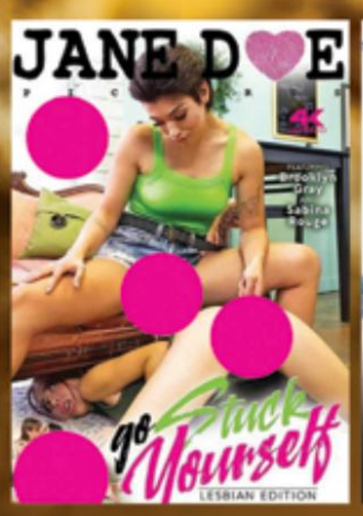

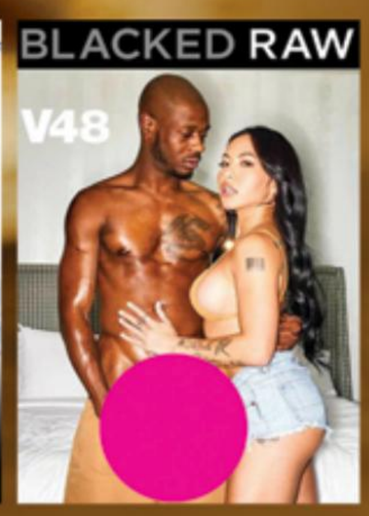

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Reopening Party

BURLESQUE • DRAG • FASHION SHOW

MILA LA MACHINA WILLY LAQUEUE JOSEPHINE SHAKER DOM DRAPER
MIZON GARDE LUSHES LAMOAN SKUNK LEENA ALLURE EROS DUREVENANT
SIRGIN GRAVE DANGER CAVITY RYOTTEN BEDBUG GIGI PURIN

INTERACTIVE INSTALLATION AND PHOTOBOOTH BY DOOMVANA
SHOP NOIR LEATHER AND MAISON DE MILA POP-UPS

Models - Mila La Machina & Eros Durevenant Photo - Sean Graham